IN CELEBRATION OF

2016 NATIONAL PRO BONO WEEK

CLINICAL AND PRO BONO PROGRAMS

LEARNING THE LAW | SERVING THE WORLD
CHAMPIONING PRO BONO AT HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Joseph Michalakes ’16 wins Andrew Kaufman Pro Bono Award

Via the May 2016 Commencement Newsletter

Joseph Michalakes ’16 is the winner of the Andrew L. Kaufman Pro Bono Service Award. He was chosen for exemplifying a pro bono public spirit and demonstrating an extraordinary commitment to improving and delivering high quality volunteer legal services in low-income communities. The award is granted each year in honor of Professor Andrew Kaufman, who has been instrumental in creating and supporting the Pro Bono Program at Harvard Law School.

During his time at the law school, Michalakes has contributed over 2,000 pro bono hours by working with two Student Practice Organizations (Harvard Immigration Project and Project No One Leaves), in addition to being a clinic student attorney with the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau (HLAB).

During his 1L summer, he was the Cleary Gottlieb Fellow at the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program and Greater Boston Legal Services working on direct representation of non-citizens applying for U.S. asylum and related protections, and on appellate and policy advocacy at the local, national and international levels. He spent his 2L summer at the American Civil Liberties Union Immigrants’ Rights Project.

At the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, Michalakes has represented numerous clients in various areas of practice including wage and hour and housing cases. He has engaged in every aspect of litigation: he has drafted court documents, conducted negotiations, written settlement agreements, argued motions, and represented clients at trial. He was lead counsel on a hotly contested bench trial, which he won.

His excellent work and advocacy has made an incredible impact on the community and has ensured that many tenants were able to maintain their housing. “Joseph helped transform a weekly tenant’s meeting in East Boston into a significant source of cases and an opportunity for HLAB students to engage in community lawyering as a means to fight displacement from gentrification,” said Clinical Instructor Patricio Rossio who supervised and was one of the clinicians who nominated him for the award. In addition, Michalakes has supported his fellows at HLAB, always being the first to volunteer to help on a case.

“Whatever is asked of him, Joseph does it with enthusiasm and his contributions are always appreciated by his fellow students,” said Rossi.

“I am honored to receive this award, and very grateful to OCP for providing students with such a wide variety of opportunities to do meaningful clinical work,” Michalakes said. “I am also especially grateful to the fantastic clinical faculty I’ve been lucky enough to interact with and learn from during my time at HLS, and who have been unbelievable mentors and models for what lawyering should be.”

“Joey is beloved by all who have the pleasure of working with him,” said Lisa Dealy, Assistant Dean of the Clinical and Pro Bono Programs. “His tireless work ethic combined with his humility make him an extraordinary advocate. We could not be more pleased that he has won the award.”

After graduation, Michalakes plans to pursue a career in public interest, including continuing to help communities at risk here in Massachusetts. He will remain in Boston next year to work at Greater Boston Legal Services, a venture funded by the David A. Grossman Fellowship for Social Justice, which he won. Michalakes will also teach the Spanish for Public Interest Lawyers course at HLS, a non-credit course for clinic and Student Practice Organization students.
The Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs offers its heartfelt congratulations to the 27 Harvard Law students that will be recognized by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services for their commitment to pro bono work. The ceremony will be held at the Adams Courthouse on October 26th and the students will be listed on the SJC’s Pro Bono Honor Roll website.

The recognition is presented annually to law firms, solo practitioners, in-house corporate counsel offices, government attorney offices, non-profit organizations, law school faculties, and law students who certify that, in the calendar year of 2015, they have contributed at least 50 hours of legal services without receiving pay or academic credit.

**Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Pro Bono Honor Roll Students:**

- Roi Bachmutsky, JD ’17
- Aldel Brown, JD ’17
- Alexander Chen, JD ’17
- Ryan Cohen, JD ’17
- Joanna Cornell, JD ’18
- Andrene Dabaghi, JD ’17
- Laura Dismore, JD ’17
- Lauren Godles, JD ’17
- Eric S. Goodwin, JD ’18
- George Hageman, JD ’17
- Andrew Hanson, JD ’17
- Shaylyn Harper, JD ’17
- Ha Ryong Jung, JD ’18
- Mario Hoang N. Nguyen, JD ’17
- Sean Henryk Parys, JD ’17
- Kelly Jo Popkin, JD ’17
- Katherine Sandson, JD ’17
- Stephanie Schuyler, JD ’17
- Rebecca Schwarz, JD ’18
- Marin Tollefson, JD ’17
- Michael Trujillo, JD ’18
- Loren Voss, JD ’17
- Kasey Wang, JD ’17
- Yong Lucien Wang, JD ’18
- Emily Wilkinson, JD ’17
- Pamela Yaacoub, JD ’17

**PRO BONO BY THE NUMBERS**

- 40%: The number of low and moderate-income households that experience a legal problem each year according to the American Bar Association.
- 11: The number of Student Practice Organizations (SPOs) at Harvard Law School, where students work pro bono on real-life legal matters under the supervision of licensed attorneys.
- 668: The number of HLS student placements for the 2015-16 academic year in Student Practice Organizations.
In law school, especially as 1Ls, we are convinced that being a law student means certain things. Our role models—professors, impressive alumni, upperclassmen—define the experience as revolving around specific markers of prestige. Clerking. Journals. Ames. And, perhaps most of all, arguing before a judge in court. That being a lawyer means litigating is reinforced by everything from movies and television to our casebooks themselves; when we learn the law almost entirely through appellate opinions, the lesson becomes that lawyering means standing before a panel of robed figures.

But for me, the most important thing I’ve learned at Harvard Law School is that I was all wrong. Litigation plays an outsized role in how society attempts to solve problems. To be sure, court-talking lawyers are important, but they are just one of many types. The modern field of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has grown in response to the shortcomings of litigation, particularly the cost, time, and dissatisfying results symptomatic of court-imposed outcomes.

From my early days here, the Harvard Mediation Program (HMP) stood out as a way to answer a nagging question about the legal system and to help me achieve one of my main law school goals. The question was this: why does litigation sometimes seem so dissatisfying? The answer: because it often is. Every law student reads cases where the outcome just isn’t “right,” whether because it seems divorced from common sense or because a sympathetic party gets the short end of the stick.

Mediating with HMP has taught me there are other options. Parties working together within a flexible, collaborative process can arrive at win-win solutions that are less likely to emerge through the blunt instrument of litigation.

In a low cost, neutral setting, people can share concerns, discover what makes the other party tick, and better understand what interests underlie their own positions.

Abraham Lincoln said it best: “Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often the real loser—in fees, and expenses, and waste of time. As a peace-maker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.”

HMP has also helped me fulfill one of my top goals for law school: to acquire the “soft” skills I think are critical to being a lawyer—and to growing as a person. HMP members get exceptional training in how to listen, help speakers feel comfortable and heard, identify the forces animating disputes, and encourage sustainable outcomes. It’s gratifying to see parties respond to the skills I learned by opening up, recognizing each other’s views, and seeking common ground. As a mediator, it has been incredibly rewarding and empowering to talk through problems with people and help them realize a solution. I’ve had people hug me with tears in their eyes after a mediation, which is a grounding reminder of the “real world” after spending so much time in the HLS bubble.

HMP training also has value beyond the mediation context; it informs my every day life more than anything else I’ve learned in Cambridge. Mediation skills are a great way to improve interactions with friends, family, partners, colleagues, and even casual acquaintances. The “pop science” literature is rich with discussions of how showing real interest in others (rather than waiting for our own turns to speak) strengthens relationships and leads to success. And you know what? It’s true.

HMP is an amazing community of people, a terrific place to learn valuable skills, and a wonderful way to give back to the community by helping real people solve real problems.
I came to Harvard entirely sure that I wanted to attend law school and entirely unsure of what I would do with my legal education. I entered 1L year hopeful that something in class would suddenly call out to me and lead me directly to a career path. Unfortunately, I failed to take into account the theoretical focus and survey style of the first year curriculum.

So when the Student Activities Fair arrived, I reveled in the opportunity to explore options outside the classroom. My goal was to get hands-on experience and learn about new areas of law. I left the Fair with a handful of brochures and my name on a dozen email lists.

Fortunately, I stuck with the Harvard Law Entrepreneurship Project, despite its lack of an obvious and catchy acronym (“HLEP,” how do I pronounce that?). Within a few weeks, I was in charge of four other law students – including two 2Ls – and under the supervision of a practicing attorney on a client project team. After a long day of briefing cases and discussing the occasional absurd hypothetical, I got to work on a real client matter, addressing questions whose answers would determine the trajectory of a real business, and interfacing with a real entrepreneur whose charisma and innovative spirit I greatly admired.

It took only as long as my first client meeting to decide that these are the kinds of clients I want to work with in my career. Beyond being intelligent, hardworking, and sensible, my client believed in his company. Listening to him explain his business plan, market research, and product development, I couldn’t help but get excited about his startup.

Here was this talented innovator trying to create something incredible, yet he felt inhibited by the looming storm cloud that is the law.

I finally saw where I could fit into the legal profession: I may not be an idea person myself, but I am inspired by those who are, and I want to help them create things by taking the legal concerns off their overly-crowded plates.

For this project, my team researched international trade law, tariffs, and import regulations, after anticipating patent and trademark questions based on the client’s application (my first exposure to the fairly standard occurrence in startup advising where a quick legal consultation reveals myriad previously unrecognized issues). After a successful advisory relationship, I decided to take on a leadership role where I supported a group of team leads as they managed their client projects, researching issues ranging from corporate form to equity division to intellectual property protection.

Since last December, I’ve had the pleasure of serving as President of HLEP (pronounced ‘H’-Lep, I’ve learned), during which time I’ve worked to give new members the chance to experience the “a-ha” moment I felt when I worked with my first client.
I initially joined the Mississippi Delta Project ("MDP") my 1L fall as a way to stay connected to the region that had charmed its way into a special place in my heart. While I’m originally from California and went to college in Boston, I spent the two years before law school as a high school teacher with Teach for America in Jackson, Mississippi. Many people in the nation only know Mississippi for its failures: for example, the fact that it has some of the highest rates of obesity, teen pregnancy, and child poverty in the nation. These troubles are real, and especially so in the Mississippi Delta, an area of deeply entrenched generational poverty and racial divides. But at the same time, these statistics belie the beauty of Mississippi and the indefatigable spirit of its people. Living in Mississippi I got to see the hopes that many of my students had for a better future, and the work that they, my colleagues, and others were doing to make that future a reality.

When I moved back to the Northeast for law school, it was important for me to continue contributing in some way to that movement for change, so I joined the Child and Youth Advocacy Team of MDP. Doing so ended up also being a great way to build up some of my lawyerly skills and understanding. My team was partnering with the Mississippi State Health Department to encourage “Baby-Friendly” hospital policies that would promote breastfeeding. As part of my research for the project, I had the chance to talk with health department officials in other states that had launched similar, successful initiatives. In the process, I learned a lot about implementing effective policy, and the many stakeholders and considerations involved in taking an idea from its initial conception to its ultimate fruition.

I also grew significantly as a policy writer by contributing to and editing portions of the final report that we delivered to our client.

Looking back, I can see some of the rippling effects that our work has had over the past couple of years. When we started our Baby-Friendly Hospital project, Mississippi had zero hospitals that were officially certified by UNICEF/WHO as “Baby-Friendly.” Since the release of our report, one Mississippi hospital has been certified as Baby-Friendly and at least two more are on their way. Our report also helped build the foundation to do more work around breastfeeding in Mississippi. For example, last year, another MDP team successfully campaigned to pass a state law that affirmatively protects the right of breastfeeding employees to express milk in the workplace. Seeing these kinds of results has been incredibly rewarding.

I’ve also been fortunate in my new role as Co-Chair of the project because I’ve gotten to hear from lots of new and returning members about why they joined and why they have stayed. Some have deep ties to Mississippi or other areas of the South, having been raised there and perhaps hoping to return to work there after graduation. Some, like me, aren’t from the region, but have spent some time there and become fascinated by its charms. Others have never set foot past the Mason-Dixon line before, but are intrigued by the opportunity to do domestic policy work. But above all, they share a deep and inspiring passion for creating a meaningful impact in a region that can benefit from our time and resources. The joy of collaborating with them, as well as with our amazing clients and partners on the ground in Mississippi, regularly reminds me why I’ve chosen to work in public interest law and policy.
HLS Negotiators has been a pivotal part of our experience at HLS. We both joined Negotiators the first semester of 1L to learn more about the field of dispute resolution, and we quickly realized that regardless of what career path we ended up following, the skills of negotiation, effective communication, and deal-making would be essential. Because we see this skillset as key to all law students, as board elections approached at the end of our 1L year, we made the decision to run for the Co-President positions with the purpose of expanding the work of Negotiators. Negotiators takes on client projects on a semester or yearly basis, so there is a unique opportunity for leaders in Negotiators to bring in projects that they are interested in leading, and the staff of the Harvard Negotiation Mediation Clinical Program provides student-leaders with guidance and support to make our ideas become realities.

As Co-Presidents we were responsible for the overall function of the organization, training new members, building community, communicating with client project leaders, and overseeing the budget. We identified an interest in Negotiators becoming more involved with the greater Boston community, especially youth. We created and co-led a client project team that designed and delivered a coaching program for local high school students to learn an introduction to interpersonal negotiation and effective communication. In April of our 2L year, we brought over 20 students of Cambridge Rindge and Latin School’s peer mediation program to HLS for our 8-hour coaching program. This allowed Negotiators members to engage and form relationships with the community. It also allowed us to use the skills we have developed at HLS through Negotiators to help build a foundation for effective communication in high school students, shifting their perspectives about how to approach interpersonal negotiations and relationships.

Serving as Co-Presidents and as client project leaders gave us the opportunity to deepen our knowledge of dispute resolution theory and practice while also gaining experience in direct client service, building community relationships, leading peer teams, and managing internal structures. Through Negotiators and our other ADR involvement at HLS, we’ve been struck by how this work transcends substance areas, fields, cultures, and ages.

From high school students to lawyers to diplomats, the skill set learned and taught by Negotiators is needed in all aspects of life and work. As a Student Practice Organization, HLS Negotiators hopes to help members of the HLS and Boston communities build and hone these skills to positively influence how we engage with the world.

By Lisa Dicker, J.D. ’17 and Katie Kelly, J.D. ’17
**PRISON LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT**

**Representing prisoners and shaping the rules**

By Dixie Tauber, J.D. ’17

The Prison Legal Assistance Project (PLAP) is honored to participate in Pro Bono Week! PLAP differs from other SPOs in that all students are able to join. Because of this, we are a group comprised of students with all different experiences and interests. While some PLAPers join the organization already dedicated to criminal justice reform and educated on the topic, others join without any prior knowledge or experience in the field. I joined on a whim after being encouraged by a friend, and have never looked back.

From the beginning of 1L year, PLAP provides students with the opportunity for direct client interaction and representation. Our clients contact us from prison requesting legal assistance and representation in Department of Corrections (DOC) hearings. We represent them, deliver closing arguments, and cross-examine witnesses. Working on a client’s case often times turns into a collaborative learning experience for all.

Recently, PLAP’s focus has extended far beyond just direct representation. In early October, 2Ls Andrew Dillon, Annemarie Manhardt, and Katherine Robinson testified at a DOC hearing regarding proposed changes to the current DOC regulations. The students submitted written testimony supporting some of the changes, and articulating concerns with others, and then were given the opportunity to speak in front of DOC representatives, families of incarcerated people, and representatives of the correction officers union. While it remains to be seen whether the DOC will incorporate any of our comments into the amended regulations, Katherine states that she is glad to have had this opportunity to voice our clients’ concerns, share the experiences of student attorneys who navigate these regulations, and help shape the rules that dictate so much of our clients’ lives. It is our hope that by providing both direct representation and this type of advocacy, we can make as big of an impact in the lives of prisoners as possible.

**HARVARD DEFENDERS**

“*My time in Defenders solidified my commitment to public interest*”

By Tori Anderson, J.D. ’16

I knew coming into law school that I wanted to work in public interest. Working for people and with people was very important to me and I wanted to spend my three years at HLS pursuing that. I discovered Harvard Defenders during the student activities fair in my first semester. I loved the idea of being a part of a supportive community of 1Ls, 2Ls and 3Ls who were like-minded in their commitment to giving back to the community during their time in law school. Defenders allowed me to help people in hearings where they were not provided representation and to gain experience zealously advocating for those most marginalized in society.

I have been able to represent clients in 10 cases, help with their criminal court issues, as well as connect them with housing resources, immigration consultations and school programs. During my time with Harvard Defenders, I have served as one of the Case Assignment Directors and as President. As Case Assignment Director, I ensured that people who called looking for legal help were connected with student attorneys. I also tracked the organization’s data. As President, I successfully advocated for a social worker for our clients and focused on revamping our referral network. I was able to get to know every one of our 83 members and forge lasting friendships with future public interest leaders. I learned how to research case law, look up criminal code statutes, find Massachusetts jury instructions, strategize for a case, prepare oral arguments and cross examinations and gained skills in how to navigate the often tricky relationship between student attorneys, law enforcement officers and court officials.

But my clients have taught me the most. We often meet our clients at a very difficult time in their lives when they have to face the potential of being prosecuted. They have taught me how to listen and how to be more empathetic. They have been open and showed a great ability to trust a complete stranger with personal details. My time in Defenders truly solidified my commitment to public interest. After graduation, I will be working as a public defender, a choice which was heavily influenced by my time in the organization.
Harvard Immigration Project: A voice for the immigrant community

By Amy Volz, J.D. ’18

The Harvard Immigration Project (HIP) is excited to serve as a voice on campus for immigration advocacy during a year in which debates about U.S. immigration policy and the global migrant crisis have put this area of the law in unusual focus. We strive to elevate the voice of the immigrant community on the HLS campus while providing students with meaningful hands-on experience in immigration and refugee law.

I joined HIP’s Immigration Services Project (ISP) in the fall of my 1L year. My case partner, another 1L from my section, and I were matched with a client from Central America who had recently been granted asylum in the U.S. with the help of the Harvard Immigration & Refugee Clinic (HIRC). Our goal was to assist her with her application for permanent residency in the United States. Over the course of the semester, we met with our client several times to collect the required documents and prepare her application. While we continued assembling her materials over the winter, we took on a second client, also an asylee from Central America. We sent out both applications in the spring and waited impatiently for news from Department of Homeland Security!

The good news came over the summer: both of our clients were granted permanent residency in the U.S. Having learned over the course of the year what our clients had been through on the road to these applications, it was incredibly rewarding to witness their elation when their green cards arrived. They are now on the path to citizenship and can finally build their lives in Boston with the protections and benefits of permanent residency.

My experience with HIP has reaffirmed my commitment to working for the public interest in a client-centered role. I’m fortunate to have met a community of passionate and talented people with a wealth of experience in advocacy work. This year, as Co-President, I’m excited for HIP to continue serving as a resource for students interested in immigration law. HIP members also work on two other legal services projects: the Removal Defense Project, in which students represent ICE detainees in bond hearings before the Boston Immigration Court, and the International Refugee Assistance Project, which provides legal representation to refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. We are also developing initiatives to provide students interested in immigration policy with resources to get engaged in the local community. Finally, we host regular speaker events with practitioners, judges, and HLS professors to highlight current issues in immigration and refugee law and look forward to our second annual HIP Symposium next spring!

RECORDING ARTISTS PROJECT

Counseling artists: An opportunity for real-world application of the law

By Terron East, J.D. ’17

While the music industry has undergone an influx of substantial changes within recent decades, critics have argued that the legal frameworks designed to govern this industry have become anachronistic and incompatible with the industry’s seemingly inseparable relationship with modern technology. Recently proposed legislation, such as the Songwriter Equity Act, has sought to mend such gaping holes within copyright law by allowing for a more just level of compensation for spins of composers’ musical compositions on internet radio stations. However, while this recommended revision to the Copyright Act offers a possible solution to the unfair levels of compensation reaped by composers, such a solution is by no means a panacea to the problems that plague musicians.

In addition to providing students with an outlet to apply Intellectual Property law, RAP has made concerted efforts to assist in the long-term career goals of its HLS participants. Accordingly, RAP has regularly hosted speaker events ranging from discussions regarding recent musical copyright infringement suits and their potential fallout, to panel discussions regarding the changing roles of record labels and managers within the current digital climate of music. Moreover, RAP wishes to form a community of students who have a passionate interest in entertainment law. As such, RAP also hosts excursions to events such as Berklee College of Music’s Urban Music Symposium. Such networking opportunities allow for students to both learn of recent changes within the music market and also to form ties with other HLS students interested in a career path in entertainment law as well.

Formed in 1998, the Recording Artists Project (RAP) was created with the objective of providing fledgling artists with the legal counsel necessary to protect their musical rights and build their brand, long before they’re able to take advantage of any newly proposed changes to royalties from radio play. As potential streams of revenue are continually presented to new artists throughout the onset of their careers, it has become more important than ever for these musicians to become aware of their intellectual property rights in order for their careers to flourish. More importantly, RAP serves as an indelible opportunity for HLS students to not only gain first-hand interaction with clients, but also grants students the opportunity for real world application of copyright and trademark law. Having served as both a student participant for RAP and intake director, I’ve been involved in a number of RAP projects throughout my time at HLS, ranging from LLC formations and band agreements to contract negotiations with record labels and copyright split agreements amongst several different musicians.
I came to law school with the express purpose of working in international human rights law. Immediately upon starting at HLS, I realized that this was not going to be a straightforward or easy career path. Flooded by corporate firm events and constant appeals to participate in the Early Interview Program (EIP), it became incredibly important for me to find a community of people dedicated to human rights advocacy. I wanted a group of peers with whom I could navigate an uncertain career path. I have found that community in HLS Advocates for Human Rights.

Advocates is a place for students to work on semester and year-long projects on various human rights topics. Our projects are designed and led by the students themselves under the supervision of an attorney from a partner organization who works in the field. These student-initiated projects give students a chance to work on the human rights issues they are most passionate about.

I joined Advocates as a 1L project member and continued 2L year as a project leader. With the help of six amazing students, I ran a project in partnership with the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, which looked at local laws across Massachusetts that affect homeless people. This project involved meticulously going through municipal codes and working with local governments to get their records on arrests and fines under those laws. Together we were able to engage with the local communities using international human rights as a framework. Advocates projects are a place where as early as 1L year you can start to develop practical human rights skills and learn what it is like to do human rights work on a day-to-day basis.

Now as Co-President, I have the honor and privilege of overseeing the work of our dedicated project teams. This year we have projects on a myriad of topics, all timely and important within the human rights world. These include corporate accountability in Israel/Palestine, sexual violence in South African prisons, engagement with the UN on business and human rights issues in Thailand, domestic non-consensual pornography legislation, international criminal law violations in Syria, and human rights compliance by non-state actors. In Advocates, I have found not only a space to develop my skills as a human rights advocate, but a community of people who care deeply about human rights and who have helped me navigate a more uncertain life path.
An interview with TAP student leaders

The Tenant Advocacy Project (affectionately known as TAP) represents clients in benefits termination, public housing eviction, and application denial hearings at housing authorities. TAP co-presidents Emily Seelenfreund, J.D. ’17 and Laura Dismore J.D. ’17 reflect on their time with the organization.

OCP: What interested you in working with TAP?

ES: I came to law school because I wanted to use a legal degree to make an impact in the public sector. It’s all too easy to spend 1L in a bubble but I didn’t want to become removed from the issues that impact my future clients. I chose TAP because of the opportunity to directly represent clients right from the get-go and because equitable access to housing is such a vital important right.

LD: TAP caught my attention from the very beginning – I remember realizing that I had never thought about how much housing (and particularly housing instability) can affect other aspects of people’s lives. The more I learned about TAP, the various local and state bureaucracies our clients (and, by extension, TAP members) have to navigate, and the areas of law that intersect with housing, the more excited I was to participate.

OCP: Can you describe a memorable case or project that you have worked on?

ES: I met one of my most memorable clients last year at an outreach event I coordinated with Haley House. She was facing termination of her Section 8 subsidy, without which she was unable to afford housing. At the hearing my client gave powerful testimony about how the abuse she had suffered as a child had led to a life of addiction but how with the help of Haley House and other programs she was taking control of her life. The Housing Authority found her mitigating evidence persuasive and our client retained her subsidy and was therefore able to continue turning her life around.

LD: Last year, I worked on a priority status denial case. My client had been displaced by a fire, but the housing authority had denied him natural disaster priority status because he hadn’t been able to provide documentation of his tenancy (or of the fire itself). That’s because his lease and all his other documents were burned up in the fire that made him homeless, and because the Fire Department had no record of the blaze despite multiple news articles describing its devastation. I was able to track down his landlady and get her to sign sworn statements about his tenancy.

The fire report was tricky, but we eventually found it thanks to one firefighter with an incredibly good memory: the report had been filed incorrectly, which is why my client couldn’t retrieve it despite diligent efforts. The housing authority ultimately reversed their decision and gave him priority status on the waitlist, which was an exciting victory. But even now, six years after the fire and almost a full year after he went to the top of the waitlist, my former client has yet to be given a voucher and is currently still homeless.

OCP: How would you evaluate your learning experience? Do you feel you’ve gained new skills in working with TAP?

ES: TAP has been an invaluable learning experience and among the most compelling experiences during my time at HLS. I’ve come to really understand the importance of coordination among legal services organizations, as so many of our clients are facing battles not just with their housing- but also their disability, veterans, childcare, and other services. I’ve also learned the importance of persistence- oftentimes receiving necessary documentation from other service providers requires multiple follow-ups and perseverance. TAP has two experienced clinical instructors and working with them allows students to gain experience working under supervision while still managing their own caseload.

OCP: What would you say is your biggest learning experience?

LD: Aside from the substantive legal concepts, the biggest learning experience for me has been the importance of fighting for our clients in whatever way we can. Working on a case last year, I had to follow up with a client’s former landlady who did not want to talk to me. In fact, she hung up on me the first time I called. I told my supervisor the landlady was unresponsive and that there wasn’t much we could do. My supervisor’s response will probably echo in my ears for the rest of my life: “Wow, you’re giving up on this very easily.” No one had ever told me that before, but I realized she was absolutely right. We came up with a strategy to try to get the landlady to work with us, and it succeeded! We got the documentation we needed and ultimately won the case. And I learned that if your clients need you to go to the mat for them, you do it, even if it’s scary and you’re not sure how.
Students contribute pro bono hours during spring break

Each year, teams of Harvard Law School students are given the opportunity to spend their Spring Break doing pro bono work with clinics and legal organizations in the Boston area, or working on projects around the country and abroad. These trips and placements are part of an “alternative spring break” program developed and sponsored by the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono programs at Harvard Law School.

This year, during the week of March 11-18, 2016, students worked locally at the Volunteer Lawyers Project of the Boston Bar Association; at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS); Legal Advocacy and Resource Center (LARC); and at the law school’s own Legal Services Center (LSC)/Veterans Legal Clinic.

Project teams traveled within the U.S. and abroad, working with Equal Justice Under Law in Murfressboro, TN, by contributing to a civil rights lawsuit, Rodriguez v. PCC, assisting with litigation to advance human rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) Ugandans under the supervision of lawyers at the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF); at the newly established Crossroads Cultural Arts Center (CCAC) in Clarksdale, MS with the goal to promote local artists and to use art as a tool for community connection and reconciliation; and at ProBAR in Harlingen, TX, at the Adult Legal Orientation Program, engaging in direct client representation. This is the 12th year that the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs has funded the trips, which originated in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when students went to New Orleans to assist displaced families.

Here, a few students share their accounts, reflecting on the significance of their service.
Five students traveled to Uganda over spring break to work on pending litigation that could advance human rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) Ugandans. LGBTI rights have been a contentious issue in Uganda since 2007, when LGBTI Ugandans started advocating publicly for their rights. This sparked backlash from pastors and politicians with close ties to the United States, and in 2009 a Member of Parliament proposed the death penalty for “serial offenders” of homosexuality. The death penalty was later reduced to life imprisonment, and a number of court battles over LGBTI rights ensued.

The students from Harvard worked under the supervision of lawyers at the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), a nongovernmental organization in Kampala that provides direct services, conducts research and advocacy, and coordinates strategic litigation. During the week-long trip, the team conducted legal research, met with lawyers and activists, and wrote an internal memo. Organized by Lambda at Harvard Law and Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights, the trip included Andres Caicedo ’16, Brandon Storm ’18, Brian Klosterboer ’16, Charlie Fletcher ’18, and Mitha Nandagopalan ’18.

With the guidance of HRAPF attorneys, the team researched Ugandan and international law while exploring human rights strategies for advancing the rule of law. Since 2008, HRAPF has been a leader in promoting human rights for marginalized groups, including LGBTI individuals, sex workers, and women and children living with HIV.

In August 2014, HRAPF was lead counsel in a case that overturned Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Act in the Constitutional Court. Brian Klosterboer ’16 was part of that team as he interned at HRAPF during his 1L summer. Adrian Jjuuko, HRAPF’s Executive Director, has also visited Harvard Law School twice as a speaker in the last three years.

HRAPF and Harvard strengthened these connections as students spent five days working with HRAPF attorneys and paralegals. The students also met with LGBTI clients and visited journalists and activists from the Kuchu Times Media Group (KTMG).

KTMG is an LGBTI-led media group that provides a platform for LGBTI Africans to share their stories in their own voices. It was founded in December 2014 by Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera, who had previously been a plaintiff in a lawsuit against a Ugandan tabloid. That tabloid published the names, pictures, and addresses of dozens of LGBTI Ugandans and called for them to be killed. HRAPF represented Nabagesera in the case and set an important precedent that LGBTI individuals have the same right to privacy as everyone else.

Despite this ruling, Nabagesera and others continued to be outed and attacked in Ugandan tabloids. They decided to create a magazine and news website to tell their own narratives. Last Wednesday, students met with the staff of KTMG and saw a sneak peek of the second issue of Bombastic magazine, which is set to be released next week.

While in Uganda, the team also saw a cultural dance show, went white water rafting on the Nile River, and took a boat cruise on Lake Victoria. The team was welcomed by three LLMs–Godiva Akullo ’15, Susan Mirembe ’15, and David Lewis ’15—who graduated from Harvard last year and are now lecturers of law at two leading universities in Kampala.

The memo that the team produced is confidential, but students hope that their research and analysis will contribute to HRAPF’s mission of advancing human rights for all Ugandans. The trip was sponsored by the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs, and Anna Crowe of the International Human Rights Clinic, joined students on the trip.
Navigating the border: A dispatch from ProBAR in Texas

By Edith Sangueza J.D. ’18

Seen from the outside, the Port Isabel Detention Center (PIDC) is a cheerful coral color, with an asymmetrical glass front. Palm trees and bougainvillea flowers line the well-kept grounds. A short distance away, spring breakers enjoy the beaches and beer on South Padre Island.

On the inside, though, the detention center is chilly, sterile, and unmistakably prison-like. To the more than one thousand people detained inside, it might as well be prison. Detainees, often fleeing extreme violence in their home countries in Central America, eastern Africa, and South Asia, have no right to counsel in navigating the U.S.’s byzantine immigration laws. ProBAR, a legal aid organization based in nearby Harlingen, steps in to fill the gaps, helping detainees prepare for their cases. Because of strictures from its funding model, ProBAR chiefly provides legal education and helps people so they are better prepared to represent themselves pro se.

A memorable experience with Volunteer Lawyers Project

Lan Jiangzhou LL.M. ’16

I am very grateful to have spent my spring break at Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP). I never imagined how this pro bono experience could help me in a way that is so tangible and memorable. I crafted my skills by attending the Boston Housing Court, the Boston Municipal Court, the Quincy Small Claims Court and the Suffolk Family Court; by participating in the trainings and luncheons organized by the VLP; and by interacting directly with the clients at different clinics on bankruptcy law, consumer law, guardianship law, family law and housing law. Moreover, as someone with a legal background from China, this five-day experience gave me the precious opportunity to see how the pro bono system in the U.S. is funded and operated, and the breadth and impact of the system in the communities.

My eyes were opened to substantive law areas that I have not encountered—and would not encounter—in the big law firms. During my spring break, I was introduced to a unique group of people who were energetic and incentivized, cautiously balancing the two requirements of their job: keeping a sympathetic and empathetic eye on the clients and avoiding a quick emotional burn-out. I was able to glance at a previously neglected world, which is out there, vibrant and real. I would not be exaggerating when saying that pro bono work can nourish one’s soul. By handling every individual case, we drag one person or a household out of desperation. We redefine ourselves in paving the way to justice, and in aggregation naturally assume the role of fixing the systematic problems inherent in our society that I have eye-witnessed for the past five days and could not, from then on, just stand by.
Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly has named Senior Clinical Instructor and Co-Managing Director of the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic at GBLS, Nancy Kelly, as one of its Top Women for 2016. A ceremony will be held on October 27th at the Boston Marriott Copley Place to recognize her and the other honorees.

Ms. Kelly has worked as a Harvard Law School Human Rights Program fellow and also as an adjunct professor of immigration and asylum law at Northeastern University School of Law. At the Human Rights Program, she initiated the nationally and internationally prominent Women Refugees Project, a centerpiece of the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic’s work. Among other honors, Ms. Kelly received the 2000 John G. Brooks Award of the Boston Bar Association for her work with refugee women and children, and for her teaching at the clinic.

Each year Lawyers Weekly honors women attorneys who have made tremendous professional strides and demonstrated great accomplishments in the legal field, which includes: pro bono, social justice, advocacy and business. The awards highlight women who are pioneers, educators, trailblazers, and role models.

Our office extends heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Kelly on this great achievement!

Recently, the American Lawyer released the annual National and International Firms Pro Bono Rankings.

The report ranks the nation’s 200 highest-grossing firms by their pro bono score for work performed by U.S.-based lawyers. Half of the score comes from the average number of pro bono hours per lawyer in 2015, while the other half represents the percentage of lawyers who performed more than 20 hours of pro bono work.

Internationally, the report ranks firms with at least 20 non-U.S. lawyers by their scores for pro bono performed by those lawyers. Half of the score comes from the average number of pro bono hours performed by lawyers outside of the U.S. in 2015. The other half comes from the percentage of lawyers outside the U.S. who did more than 20 hours of pro bono work.

We encourage students to review the report and consider it a resource when evaluating law firms and incorporating pro bono work into their legal careers. Students can find additional pro bono resources on the Student Pro Bono Resources section of the Clinical and Pro Bono Programs website.