

NYWBA Foundation Fordham Intern Reports on Experience at Sanctuary for Families

By Leena Khandwala

The Fordham University School of Law Fellowship was established in 2002 by the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation to sponsor a student internship with Fordham's Domestic Violence Advocacy Center (DVAC), which works in conjunction with Sanctuary for Families Center for Battered Women's Legal Services (SFF). Fordham's DVAC/SFF was selected by the Foundation because of its dedication to fulfilling abused women's unmet legal needs. The first Foundation Fordham DVAC/SFF fellow, Leena Khandwala, was selected last fall for the 2002-2003 academic school year. The following is her report on her experiences in providing much-needed assistance in the administering of the DVAC/SFF programs.

I began my internship at Sanctuary for Families Center for Battered Women's Legal Services (SFF) in August 2002 and worked there until May 2003. SFF offers a wide range of services for battered women, including matrimonial, immigration and family law matters. In addition, SFF also offers shelter, counseling, child care, job assistance and other types of support services for victims of domestic violence.

The energy at SFF is evident from the minute you first step in. There are always attorneys rushing around in a hurry to get an application, affidavit or motion out. There is also a constant mill of volunteer attorneys and interns bustling around, trying to find computers (until recently, when SFF expanded to another floor, there was frequently a shortage of desk space and computers, on account of the substantial flow of people at SFF), supplies or shepherding clients. Every now and then, a client's child runs out of one of the offices. There are always toys, clothes and other supplies in the offices and common areas, remnants from the donations that SFF is constantly getting from various suppliers. The chaotic atmosphere does not, however, in any way detract from the superior quality services that SFF provides to each and every one of its clients. On the contrary, it gives one a sense of comfort and belonging, and it is one of the factors that makes working at SFF a really unique experience.

Based on my interest, I was placed in the Immigration Unit. As the Immigration Unit had several South Asian clients who spoke the same languages as I do (Urdu, Hindi and Gujrati), I was able to get to work right away. One of my first assignments was to prepare a Battered Spouse Waiver for a South Asian client from India. I conducted several interviews with the client, and collected the documents and affidavits I would need for the Waiver. I found that my supervising attorney provided me with just the right level of guidance. While I was given wide latitude in formulating the strategy for the Waiver and in making decisions about which documents to include, I could always seek advice when I was unsure about something. In this way, I was able to learn a lot from just one Waiver, and moreover, had a strong sense of ownership about it. Over the course of my internship, I

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NOTES ON MEMBERS

Congratulations to **Rebecca Rolland** on the occasion of her 95th birthday on September 10, 2003..... Congratulations to **Hon. Florence Perlow Shientag** on the occasion of her birthday in September 2003..... Olympic College in Washington State has honored NYWBA President **Elizabeth Bryson** as an outstanding alumna, and she served as the keynote speaker at its annual fundraising luncheon on October 13, 2003. In their remarks, Olympic officials noted that Ms. Bryson has had an outstanding career as an attorney and now serves as a Corporate Vice President of New York Life Insurance Company and as President of the New York Women's Bar Association. The fundraiser was very successful, raising over \$125,000 for the Olympic College Foundation..... As of November 1, 2003, **Elise A. Yablonski** has been promoted to Senior Counsel in the Litigation and Dispute Resolution Department of Proskauer Rose LLP. Ms. Yablonski has served on the NYWBA Board and is now Recording Secretary of NYWBA.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

*Lucia Bauknicht
Rachel Brecher
Gina DelChiaro
Valerie Feigen
Amy Elizabeth Halpert
Jocelyn Jacobson
Beth L. Kaufman
Lillian Rae Lindsay
Frederica L. Miller
Laurie C. Nelson
Hui-Chun Rinker
Alysia A. Solow
Mary Beth Steele
Donna Marie Werner
Natalie Wetenhall
Laleh Zoughi*

NEW YORK WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

cordially invites you to attend the

New York Women's Agenda Star Breakfast

Tuesday, December 2, 2003, 7:30 a.m.

Grand Ballroom, New York Hilton Hotel & Towers
Avenue of the Americas & 53rd Street

*For information about this important annual event
and the costs for individual tickets, full tables, etc.,
go to www.nywa.org or call 212-843-1706*

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did another Battered Spouse Waiver and a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Self Petition.

Another tremendous learning opportunity involved the case of a client whose children were kidnapped by their father to Pakistan. As Pakistan is not a signatory to the Hague Convention, there way no way for us to use international law to retrieve her children. Consequently, we collaborated with a prominent human rights lawyer in Pakistan to advocate on our client's behalf. Eventually, the Pakistan court ruled in favor of our client, and we were able to assist our client in gaining custody of the children. She is now safely placed in a battered women's shelter in New York, where she is receiving counseling and is learning to speak English. SFF is currently in the process of finalizing her divorce securing her a permanent legal status in the United States.

My final assignment at Sanctuary (and also the most demanding one) involved the Green Card applications for a Pakistani family that had been living in the United States since 1987 and was facing deportation pursuant to Special Registration (a process in which males over 18 from certain countries, primarily Muslim, were required to register with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services). The case was quite complicated because the initial paperwork for their Green Cards had been filed several years ago, and the family no longer had the required original documentation. Nevertheless, we were able to pull together enough documentation to convince the Bureau to issue them Green Cards.

One of the most exciting and unique aspects of working at SFF is the flexibility and creativity with which the staff seeks solutions for domestic violence victims. Once SFF takes on a client, it tries to ensure that she is provided with a complete solution to her needs and problems. This is particularly important for domestic violence victims, who often face a variety of issues that, in conjunction, exacerbate their situation and enhance their vulnerability. For services that SFF cannot provide on its own, such as criminal law issues, it works closely with other agencies to ensure that the client has a sense of continuity and familiarity. As an intern, this approach enabled me to think outside the box. It was extremely rewarding to be able to provide a client with a complete solution and to work with attorneys who are unwilling to settle for anything less. Every attorney at SFF is imbued with a similar passion and dedication to their cause. No wonder then that this enthusiasm and energy rubs off on other people, and SFF has a constant stream of volunteer attorneys and interns willing to dedicate their time and energy to SFF's cause and clients.

My fulfilling experience at SFF made me realize that SFF was exactly the kind of place that I would like to begin my public interest career after graduation. Therefore, I am currently in the process of preparing applications for Skadden and Equal Justice America fellowships so that I am able to continue working with them. My objective is to focus on gender-based asylum cases, which is a service for which SFF receives numerous requests.

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Confirms No Link Between Abortion and Subsequent Breast Cancer Risk

Many of us have seen "scare e-mails" that have been circulated on the Internet in which someone attempts to argue that women who undergo abortions are more likely to develop breast cancer later in life. Research by distinguished medical authorities debunks this myth, however.

There is no evidence supporting a causal link between induced abortion and subsequent development of breast cancer, according to a committee opinion issued in July 2003 by The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). ACOG's opinion is in agreement with the conclusion reached at the National Cancer Institute's Early Reproductive Events and Breast Cancer Workshop, which met in March 2003.

ACOG conducted an extensive review of the available research. The most recent studies are from China, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which found no effect of induced abortion on breast cancer risk.

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE KATI MARTON TO SPEAK AT NYWBA FOUNDATION'S SECOND FUNDRAISING BREAKFAST

On November 19, 2003, Kati Marton, award winning Journalist, Human Rights Advocate, best-selling Author, and recipient of a 2002 Matrix Award for Women Who change the World, will speak at the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation breakfast. Ms. Marton is the author of five books, the latest being "Hidden Power: How Presidential Marriages Have Shaped Our Recent History." "Hidden Power" offers a compelling view of how presidential marriages affected the tone, character, and even the policies of eleven administrations.

The 8:00 a.m. breakfast at the Harvard Club, 27 West 44th Street, Manhattan, is the second in the Foundation's new series to raise funds for Foundation fellowships in regional law schools. Fellows are placed with non-profit agencies that promote the safety and well being of women and children.

For this fundraiser, we have an additional opportunity. You can give a public high school student with a proven interest in law the opportunity to participate in a professional activity and excellent learning experience. Purchase an extra ticket and a student in Washington Irving High School's Law and Public Service Program will be invited to attend the Breakfast, meet members of the NYWBA and hear a wonderful speaker.

See page 7 for more details.