



NEW YORK WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JUNE 2020

I am thrilled that this month I will be sworn in as the NYWBA 2020-21 President by the **Hon. Betty Weinberg Ellerin** (NYWBA President 1969-70). Although, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to meet together in person at our Annual Dinner to celebrate another great year for our beloved Association, we will continue to support one another as a community. It is an honor to serve as your President during this difficult time. I have been inspired by many great NYWBA past presidents and leaders, and I wish to thank them for their generous support as I step into this challenging role. I look forward to serving with my wonderful fellow Officers **Magnolia D. Levy, Hon. Laura E. Drager, Jocelyn L. Jacobson, Sabrina E. Morrissey, Melissa Ephron-Mandel, Lissett Ferreira**, and especially our Immediate Past President, **Virginia A. LoPreto**, whose hard work and dedication to our organization has laid a strong foundation upon which to continue building and strengthening our community.



Amanda B. Norejko

I also look forward to working with our incoming WBASNY President **Joy A. Thompson** and her team of WBASNY Officers, including our own **Deborah G. Rosenthal** (NYWBA President 2016-2017), who will serve as WBASNY Vice-President this year. Congratulations to all of the new WBASNY Officers. I know they will do a great job navigating the challenge of bringing together a statewide organization when traveling to distant meetings is not possible for the foreseeable future.

I congratulate **Michael W. Appelbaum**, who will receive the NYWBA's Doris S. Hoffman Award at our virtual Installation and Awards Ceremony on **June 9, 2020** in recognition of his many years of service to our organization. In addition to being a long-time Board member, he has led our membership recruitment efforts, organized dinners and auctions, and served on the Judiciary Committee, to name just a few of his contributions to our success. This year he was elected to serve on the NYWBA Advisory Council.

In a time of crisis, when New Yorkers are experiencing tragedy on an enormous scale and our society is suffering economic distress, I hope that our organization can offer our members some measure of comfort, assistance, and camaraderie, as well as an opportunity to amplify their voices in raising awareness and calling for action on important issues.

Our members are faced with challenges never before seen in our professional careers. This is a time for us to work together and support each other to promote the well-being of our members and advancement of the principles of justice and equality upon which this Association was founded. The current public health crisis has taught us that we are all in this together. We

(Continued on Page 2)

Please join us to celebrate

NYWBA's Virtual 85th Anniversary and 2020 Award & Installation Ceremony

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Hon. Laura E. Drager
Jocelyn L. Jacobson
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* * *

*The Doris S. Hoffman Service Award
will be presented to*

Michael W. Appelbaum

* * *

Tuesday, June 9, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
via Zoom Conference

To RSVP, go to <https://bit.ly/NYWBA-85>

President's Message (Continued from Page 1)

must combine an awareness of history with the flexibility to change our practices for the greater good of our community. As we take measures to ensure safety and security for ourselves and our families, we must not forget the suffering of the most vulnerable and marginalized people in our City. I hope that an ethos of responsibility for the well-being of others will emerge from this collective trauma.

As your President, I will endeavor to respond to the needs of our members and encourage our members in turn to respond to the needs of our community, with a focus on public service initiatives and community building. Whether we meet in person or gather through electronic methods, it is more important than ever to expand and maintain our social and professional contacts. Together we can overcome our physical isolation with opportunities for networking to create a more diverse and inclusive legal community.

The NYWBA is committed to keeping our members informed and connected through virtual CLE offerings, committee meetings, our newsletter, and social media. Since 2012, the NYWBA has been able to offer free CLE programs to our members because of the generous bequest of one of our Founders, **Hon. Florence Perlow Sheintag**. We will continue to provide this service to help our members stay on the cutting edge of developments in the law through informative webinars until the time when we can once again meet in person.

In the coming year, we will expand and diversify our newsletter with thought-provoking opinion columns, features on our illustrious members, information about pro bono and public service opportunities, and more content to inform and entertain our members. We will increase our social media presence to stay in touch even when we cannot meet face to face. If you have an interest in organizing a program, joining or forming a committee, writing a newsletter article, or getting more involved in our organization, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly.

At a time when all of us as individuals may struggle with feeling powerless in the wake of a pandemic, it is critical that we recognize our collective strength and use it to empower others and ourselves. This month, I want to highlight the empowerment of the LGBTQ community.

June is LGBTQ Pride month, and it is a historic month in the movement for LGBT rights. Our city is usually alive with inspiring Pride events, including the annual Pride March, which was scheduled to celebrate its 50th anniversary this year. Due to COVID-19, the parade has been postponed and the rainbow-festooned people who usually fill the streets will instead be locked away. However, it is important that this June we recognize these valued members of our community and honor their ongoing struggle for equality by remaining vigilant against efforts to abridge their hard-won rights.

On June 28, 1969, when police raided the Stonewall Inn, resistance to anti-LGBT laws was ignited, and galvanized a gay rights movement here in New York and beyond. On June 28, 1970—the first anniversary of the Stonewall raid on the Stonewall Inn—gay rights activists organized the first Gay Pride Week, capped off with a march that inspired pride celebrations around the country. Nine years ago, we celebrated the passage of the Marriage Equality Act (signed into law on June 24, 2011), which legalized same-sex marriage in New York State. Seven years ago, we celebrated the landmark Supreme Court decision of *United States v. Windsor* (decided on June 26, 2013), which struck down Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act as unconstitutional, thereby protecting the rights of states to define marriage as including same-sex couples.

But the rights enshrined in these legislative and Supreme Court victories are in danger of being eroded by federal agencies and a U.S. Justice Department arguing that anti-gay discrimination is not unlawful, and by Supreme Court decisions in the past two years that uphold the rights of businesses to discriminate.

This June, it is as important as ever that we celebrate Pride Month despite the challenges of social distancing. Some ways you can commemorate Pride at home include dressing up and posting about Pride on social media, learning about the history of Pride, doing rainbow-themed arts and crafts with your children, making donations to local LGBTQ organizations, and participating online in "Global Pride," a live-streamed event on June 27 featuring speeches from human rights activists, workshops, and high-profile performers. I hope you will all celebrate and carry forward the fight for equality.

My mission for this year is to use my own experiences to help our members get through this difficult time and continue our organization's mission to improve the status of women in society, educate women lawyers, assist them in professional development and advancement, and promote the fair and equal administration of justice. I have learned that even when things look their bleakest, it helps to keep moving forward and fix your sights on the brighter horizon. Dedicating my life to something greater than myself has kept me going and helped me cope with the toughest circumstances, including my fight against ovarian cancer last year. I am excited to devote the next year to serving the NYWBA as your President.

Amanda

Pro bono Opportunities

VOLUNTEER FROM HOME TO HELP DV VICTIMS AND THEIR CHILDREN

During this difficult time, victims of domestic violence and their children are particularly vulnerable, and their need for services is greater than ever. Sanctuary for Families is dedicated to the safety, healing and self-determination of victims of domestic violence and related forms of gender violence. Through comprehensive services for our clients and their children, and through outreach, education and advocacy, we strive to create a world in which freedom from gender violence is a basic human right. Sanctuary for Families is seeking volunteers to assist clients virtually during the pandemic. Some of the assistance needed includes one-on-one tutoring, translation, and interview preparation with Economic Empowerment Program clients who are seeking employment. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact **Emily Lo Bue**, Director of Corporate and Volunteer Relations, at elobue@sffny.org.

NYWBA wishes to acknowledge the generous gift from

**FOUNDER AND PAST PRESIDENT
HON. FLORENCE PERLOW SHIENTAG
(1908-2009)**

Her financial bequest has helped to underwrite the cost of this Newsletter and many of our CLE programs.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Rachel Bond	Laurie A. Rempp
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Lesley Brovner	Joy S. Rosenthal
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Stella Kestell Hirsch	Alexandria Stiteler
Alexa Jodoin	Carol Stone Swidler
Lucia Maxwell	Angela M. Wanslow
Georgia B. McKenzie	Morgan Webber-Otley
Vidya Pappachan	

as of 05/20/2020

NOTES ON MEMBERS

The NYWBA proudly congratulates **Elizabeth A. Bryson** (NYWBA President 2003-2005) on being elected Vice-President of the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations.

NEW YORK WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION and NEW YORK CITY BAR ASSOCIATION

present

The Martha E. Gifford Summer Program

"What It's (Really) Like To Practice Law As A Woman"

~ WEBINAR ~

Law students, summer associates, summer interns, new attorneys, and recruiting coordinators are invited to hear an outstanding panel of attorneys share their experiences in government, large firms, small firms, non-profit organizations and in-house law departments and discuss the issues that significantly affect women lawyers just entering the profession.

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

Zoom Link & RSVP info coming soon.

Your Opinion Matters

NYWBA is seeking monthly opinions on legal matters. Please send your op-ed piece to opinions@nywba.org.

Who was Crystal Eastman? An early, kindred spirit, that's who.

By Sabrina E. Morrissey

I came across an article in the May edition of the DC Bar magazine, the *Washington Lawyer*, about a new biography of Crystal Eastman. The book, entitled "Crystal Eastman: A Revolutionary Life," was written by Professor Amy Aronson of Fordham University. What caught my eye was the phrase, "America's most dangerous woman." I wondered why, and I read on.

According to the article, Eastman was a lawyer, suffragist and journalist, who fought for social justice, voting rights for women, and workplace safety. Encyclopedia Britannica reports that she wrote the first worker's compensation law in New York. Her work on women's suffrage resulted in the creation of the Congressional Union, which later became the National Women's Party. She lobbied for peace in opposition to World War I. In 1917, she cofounded the National Civil Liberties Bureau, which in 1920 became the American Civil Liberties Union. She was a multi-talented, energetic woman.

Eastman, who was born in 1881, graduated from Vassar College in 1903 and later from Columbia University (MA) and New York University School of Law in 1907, where she ranked second in her class.

I did a little more internet research. According to a December 16, 2019 article in *The Nation* magazine, Eastman was one of a generation of women (and men) who, in the first decades of the new century, were bent on making it a revolutionary one. Eastman's parents were both ministers and, as a family, they supported universal suffrage, justice for the poor, education for women, and the abolition of slavery. Her parents' ideals started a fire that burned deep within Eastman and was fanned into flames by the group of Greenwich Village progressives with whom she affiliated.

Over the years, Eastman traveled widely for her causes, making speeches, writing articles and organizing campaigns. Deservedly, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. I have always been interested in the efforts of women that went before to pave our way, and it seems that, in Crystal Eastman, we have another hero. Now that I have scratched the surface, I cannot wait to read Professor Aronson's biography and learn more about this kindred spirit.

Wearing Two Hats and Sweats

By Jessica L. Toelsted

On March 3, 2020, nearly three months ago, I sat at a table in a conference room in the middle of Manhattan with a group of colleagues I hadn't seen in some time. We said hello, gave one another hugs and air kisses and sat six inches apart (pre-social distancing). We were there to discuss the upcoming year, our future meetings, presenters we might bring in. Before we got down to business, the conversation turned to the coronavirus. A colleague sitting next to me asked, "Is this going to be a thing?" That set us all off. Do we stock up on food? Do we prepare to work remotely? Do we buy all the toilet paper and the hand sanitizer we can find? I was personally wondering the same - my husband and I had started to prepare just in case. The only thing I had not considered as I rushed to find stores that still had Kleenex and Charmin, was what I need to keep my kids busy if this coronavirus indeed became a "thing."

The following Monday was my last day in my office and I have been home for a little over seven weeks as I type this now. When this began, my boy/girl twins were still attending nursery school. They were nearly a month shy of turning four. That first week, my working from home felt just like "normal." You see, if I'm being honest (and I am not always such when it comes to my work schedule, as lawyers can be judge-y), I usually work part-time. I am lucky enough to be a partner at a firm where I am permitted to work three days a week in the office. Two days a week, I am technically "off." That does not mean I do not work two days a week, but my billable hour requirement is less (as is my salary) and I have flexibility and my version of balance. So, that first week. I was working from home two days while my kids were at school 9-3. Easy peasy lemon squeezy, as my kids like to say.

Then, the coronavirus became a thing. My colleagues' daycares started closing, schools started closing, and soon enough, I received the dreaded notification from my kids' school that they would be closing too. By Monday morning, March 16, I was a part-time matrimonial lawyer (shhhh - don't tell anyone) working from a makeshift desk in my bedroom, and a full-time mother/housekeeper/cleaner/cook/teacher and, oh, a wife. And yet, who can complain these days? If you are healthy, if you do not have someone close to you has died, if you have a job, a salary, food, wine, what else can you possibly ask for right now? The answer is nothing.... and yet if you are being honest, if I am being honest, the answer is also everything that we miss about our regular lives.

This has been an amazing time to revisit and experience a home life that even I do not have as a part-time lawyer. We literally have nowhere to go and nowhere to be. The white board that usually sets out our activities, when I work, when my husband works, who is watching our kids... it is blank. I erased it and it remains blank waiting for the day when we once again have somewhere to be. Right now, we only have to be together, which is amazing and difficult all at the same time.

My work schedule is now 4am to 8am and 12:30pm to 3pm most days of the week, and those are the hours when my kids are sleeping, that I can stand to be awake. Once they go to bed for the night, the day is done, and my brain shuts off. My husband is a captain with the FDNY, and he is gone on modified assignment four days a week. On the fifth day that he is home, I work all day. In between, when work is happening and my kids are up, I do what I can. I wear both hats and they are heavy.

When the quarantine began, I was all about a "schedule" for the kids; I broke out my chalkboard, and wrote up a daily schedule that included school, reading, play, lunch, all the ridiculous nonsense of someone who had never been

in quarantine indefinitely with children (read: all of us). After a week or two, I realized that my schedule was stressing me out and probably stressing them out and I erased the damn board and put it away. Now, we do whatever works in the moment. If it is nice out, we go for a bike ride. If it is crappy out, we set up a tent on our deck and they play. If they want to watch TV, usually I say yes. If they want to stay in their PJs, I don't fight it. Ultimately, who cares. Happy kids.... That is all we are after right now and they are happy.

After about a month of this new life, I realized that it wasn't the kids who needed a schedule - it was me. I was working every spare moment, no longer exercising (as I was accustomed to at my thrice weekly Orangetheory classes), I was not sleeping, and I felt like crap. Once I realized that I needed the chalkboard more than my kids and I started making time to get in a workout and occasionally sleep past 4am, I started to feel more in control of my life again.

While trying to work at home with two kids is a struggle, it is the same struggle that everyone else with kids is facing, at least to some degree. While I am on a call with a client and she asks me to ponder her settlement in relation to my own marriage and my children are running overhead, it all feels a bit surreal. Despite the struggle, I have started to worry how much longer this will go on, not because I want to resume life as usual, but because I am scared how much my heart will break the first time I leave our home for a normal day of work in the city.

My son has stopped asking every night if I will be here in the morning (I usually leave for work before they both get up) and my daughter has stopped calling my name for nonsense for an hour every night after she goes to bed. There is a certain security my kids feel having me here every single day and night and while it is not reasonable (financially or otherwise) to continue "this life" forever, I will miss it and know they will too. So, even in the middle of quarantine, I am already dreading it being over, which is hilarious since in my office pool I voted for May 13 as our "return to work day!" So, for now, I am committed to appreciating this time together because it will come to an end, as all good things do. I will go back to wearing my work hat at work (without sweats) and wearing my mom hat at home (in sweats) and bed time will be a shit show and I will long for the day when my only issue was having nowhere to go and nothing to do.

Virtual Mentoring Circles



This LGBTQ Pride Month, Remembering a Lesbian Trailblazer on the Bench

By Matthew J. Skinner, Esq.,

Executive Director, The Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission of the New York Courts

A key part of LGBTQ Pride Month every June is remembering the courageous giants who have paved the way for those who follow them. This year, many in New York's LGBTQ legal community will be remembering the late U.S. District Judge **Deborah A. Batts**.

When Judge Batts was sworn in as a United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York during Pride Week in June 1994, she became the nation's first openly LGBTQ Article III judge and joined the very small sorority of African-American women on the federal bench. For the LGBTQ community, she stood alone as a party of one in the nationwide federal judiciary for the next seventeen years. In 2012, Batts assumed senior status, but continued to maintain an active docket until her death. Tragically, she passed away too soon this February at the age of 72, following complications from knee surgery. Her death made national headlines, given the trailblazing nature of her judicial career.

Last June, The Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission of the New York Courts partnered with the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and the International Association of LGBTQ+ Judges to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Judge Batts' ascension to the federal bench. The Second Circuit hosted its first ever LGBTQ Pride Month event with the Failla Commission at the Thurgood Marshall United States Courthouse in Foley Square. The ceremony included remarks from Second Circuit Chief Judge Robert Katzmann, a previously recorded conversation with Judge Batts and other local gay federal judges Paul Oetken, Alison Nathan, and Pamela Chen, and even a video tribute from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Justice Sotomayor became dear friends with Judge Batts after they were both recommended for federal judgeships by U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan on the same day in 1991, although Judge Batts did not get confirmed to the bench until three years after Justice Sotomayor. When Judge Batts died, Justice Sotomayor traveled to the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in Manhattan to attend her funeral and deliver a beautiful eulogy.

Born in Philadelphia, Batts graduated from Radcliffe College in 1969 and from Harvard Law School in 1972. During law school, she served on the editorial board of the Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review. Upon graduation, she clerked for Judge Lawrence W. Pierce, then a U.S. District Court Judge for the Southern District of New York. After six years in the litigation department at Cravath Swaine & Moore, Batts became a prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office, also in New York's Southern District. Five years later she joined the faculty at Fordham Law School. She was the first African-American faculty member at Fordham Law and became a tenured associate professor in May 1990. Batts taught property, legal research and writing, federal criminal pre-trial procedure, domestic relations, and an advanced domestic relations seminar on non-traditional families until 1994. That year, she resigned her tenure after being nominated to the bench by President Bill Clinton. Batts later returned to Fordham as an adjunct professor who taught trial advocacy during the course of her quarter century on the bench.

As a judge in the Southern District, she worked closely with a mentoring program that seeks to increase diversity among lawyers appointed for indigent defendants and made time to help former prisoners, working

evenings as part of a Southern District program called RISE aimed at reducing recidivism among at-risk offenders.

She is survived by her wife, Dr. Gwen Zornberg, her children, James and Alexandra McCown, two grandsons, and three sisters.



NYWBA Board Meeting, May 13, 2020



Working While Parenting In the Time of COVID-19 By Elysa Greenblatt

How many articles have there been about juggling working and parenting? 100? 500? More? Whether it was serious or satire, the conclusion always seemed to be the same: it was hard. Sometimes it seemed impossible to keep all of the balls in the air. Operating at 80% on the home and work fronts each day was a win but often felt like a loss.

Then 2020 came knocking. Adding a worldwide pandemic to the mix has made all of that original juggling seem like a cake walk. Being 80% on top of everything would be like hitting a grand slam. Now we are working, parenting, homeschooling and housekeeping. I don't know about you, but this is not what I signed up for. Remember that BBC video of the toddler who interrupted her dad's interview? Oh, how we laughed. These days it's impossible to have a call without a child interrupting. All of the working parents have gained tiny co-workers and we are ready to fire them. They are demanding. They are needy. They often have poor listening skills and little patience. The noise can be maddening.

Updates from the Court come every week. Now we can do phone conferences while your kids are using your bed as a trampoline for gym class! Great news: virtual court appearances can be scheduled for the exact time as your kid's Zoom Spanish class! Maybe we can start doing trials from home in the coming weeks! Fantastic! I'll just find a shirt that isn't covered with glitter glue and pray that my kids won't run by my computer screen naked while screaming they have no clean clothes to wear. And be prepared for breaks every 20 minutes since that seems like the longest time period I can go without hearing little voices scream "Mommy, I neeeeeeeeed you!"

If you think we are kidding, here is a small sampling of what our co-workers have done since we started working at home:

1. My co-workers are using the bathtub as a pool while I try to work.
2. My co-workers sprayed shaving cream all over the bathroom and themselves while I was on a call with the Court.
3. My co-workers need a snack break every five minutes and everything I offer them is wrong.
4. My co-workers want to sit on my lap during all of my Zoom calls.
5. My co-worker demanded a haircut while I was in the middle of a conference call.
6. My co-worker stained my hardwood floors with freeze-dried blueberries while I was on a call with the Court.

We don't know when New York offices and courts will start opening up. But we do know that schools are closed for the rest of this school year and camps probably won't open. So be kind to your working parent colleagues. We aren't going anywhere until we can pass the homeschooling torch back to the real teachers.



*Artwork by NYWBA Foundation President
Gretchen Beall Schumann's children.*



LGBT Immigration Spotlight: RUSA LGBT

By Nicole Steinberg, Corby Johnson and Dante Matero

For more than a decade, Russia and other post-Soviet countries have implemented anti-LGBTQ laws and fostered the open harassment of queer people. Because of this, an expanding wave of LGBTQ Russian-speakers fleeing discrimination and violence have begun to settle in places like New York City, where there is a large Russian-speaking community already in place. While there are some Russian-language community service organizations already in the area, RUSA LGBT, founded in 2008, fills in a service gap for LGBTQ Russian-speaking immigrants with very specialized needs. Much of RUSA LGBT's activism centers around asylum, as many of its members are, or were, seeking political asylum in the U.S. on the grounds of sexual minority discrimination. Over the past three years, the Trump administration's hardline, idiosyncratic tweaking of immigration policy has encumbered an already outmoded system and has made asylum status an even more purposefully difficult and traumatizing status to reach.

RUSA LGBT holds weekly meetings to build community and offer legal, informational and emotional support. Alongside information about Russian-language job opportunities, city and state services, legal referrals, and medical and housing support, for the past several years RUSA LGBT has partnered with SAFE (Seeking Asylum and Finding Empowerment) to run a monthly, and now in partnership with CBST Sanctuary Coalition, a weekly legal clinic. This clinic, run by non-attorney volunteers and supervised by experienced immigrant rights organizers and lawyers, gives free legal advice in English and Russian and helps asylum-seekers prepare successful applications to ultimately gain the status necessary to build new fulfilling lives. Alongside material and legal support, RUSA LGBT also provides much-needed emotional support and community to a population that is still coping with the trauma that follows years of persecution.

Additionally, RUSA LGBT holds an annual Brighton Beach Pride March, which aims to "keep breaking the silence about LGBTIQ people in the Russian-speaking community" of Brighton Beach in Brooklyn. Most of RUSA LGBT's members have fled oppressive or illiberal regimes that curtailed free speech, so events like this are a potent reminder of the freedoms gained by immigration.

WHAT RUSA LGBT HAS DONE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

With the shutdown of many businesses and government agencies across New York due to the coronavirus, many RUSA LGBT members find themselves among the hardest hit. Because preparing their asylum applications can take from several months to a year, many members lack proper documentation. As such, these seekers, who comprise a large portion of RUSA LGBT, work informal jobs in the service sector, such as in restaurants, cleaning services, hair salons, and babysitting. As these jobs have disappeared with the closing of businesses deemed inessential, asylum seekers find themselves simultaneously without their main source of income and ineligible for all government benefits. Even those who submitted their applications a few months before the closing of USCIS, and so have asylum pending status, are ineligible for most government benefits. This includes Cash Assistance and SNAP, but also unemployment, as it takes 180 days after applying for asylum to receive work authorization. It is also important to note that even those with valid work authorizations might not be eligible for unemployment benefits since it takes significant time to enter the formal labor market, which is often inhospitable to immigrants and non-English speakers.

In response to COVID-19, RUSA LGBT has supported its community in important ways. RUSA LGBT has translated valuable government resources and

documents into languages that are accessible to the Russian speaking community. It has interviewed Russian-speaking officials and representatives of organizations to answer frequently asked questions surrounding the crisis, such as what benefits may be available. It also continues to provide legal support to asylum seekers through regular, remote legal clinics despite USCIS's recent closing.

Further, RUSA LGBT has provided financial assistance to the most vulnerable members of its community. According to a recent survey, because of their immigration status, almost 70% of members do not have access to most if not all benefits that would allow them to cover basic needs like groceries and rent. Beginning March 28, RUSA LGBT started to pull from its own funding to give to many who have requested assistance, distributing nearly \$12,000. The organization has received over 120 requests for help and continues to receive more requests every day. Without the assistance of RUSA LGBT, recent arrivals to the US would certainly be without necessary linguistic, material, and emotional support to navigate the difficult process of resettlement and adjustment, made even more difficult by the current crisis. As members of the LGBTQ community who have fled their countries because of increasing violence and harassment, these asylum seekers were among the most vulnerable in their home countries -- and now, among some of the most vulnerable New York City residents.

RUSA LGBT has consistently stepped up to fill the years-long gap between arriving in the US and receiving permanent status, a gap that is especially detrimental right now. RUSA LGBT membership will only increase in the coming years, as Eastern European and Eurasian LGBTQ communities battle one of the fastest-growing HIV epidemics in the world, and governments continue to be complicit in the persecution of sexual minority groups. RUSA LGBT must be able to continue to provide aid to the most vulnerable members of our community and our society. Providing emergency assistance has strengthened their position as an essential organization in the Russian-speaking LGBTQ community, and in the future, they will continue to build their capacity as an organization to expand services and reach more people.

For more information on RUSA LGBT, please email: info@rusalgbt.com.

If you would like to donate or contact RUSA LGBT directly, you may do so here: <https://rusalgbt.com/donate/> or here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-lgbtimmigrants-during-coronavirus-crisis>.

If you would like to volunteer and assist RUSA LGBT at its weekly immigration clinic, please email: Sanctuary@cbst.org or info@safeasylum.com.

Michael Schreiber contributed to this article. He is a Co-Chair of both the NYWBA LGBT and Immigration Committees; a former immigration attorney and a RUSA LGBT volunteer. Nicole Steinberg, Corby Johnson and Dante Matero are outstanding RUSA LGBT volunteers.



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NYWBA Membership Information

We thank our current members for their continued support and involvement, and we look forward to welcoming new and renewing members. Take advantage of our many membership benefits - join committees, network, participate in mentoring circles, attend our signature events, and get CLE credits at our innovative and compelling programs at a significantly reduced cost. It's easy to join or renew - go to www.nywba.org/Membership to access our secure online membership form.

Current members should send updated address and contact information to ED@nywba.org. This will help us keep you informed about our programs, events, and other benefits of membership.

Newsletter and Advertising Information

Submissions must be sent to the Newsletter Committee (Chairs **Dana E. Heitz**, **Gabriella Formosa**, **Jennifer Branca** and **Katelyn M. Brack**) by the 10th of the month for publication in the following month's Newsletter. Please submit articles, announcements, upcoming event programming, photos, committee news, member news, and ads to newsletternywba@gmail.com. Submissions should be proofed and cite-checked, and NYWBA retains the usual editorial discretion to omit or edit all contributions. Send an email to newsletternywba@gmail.com if you have questions or are interested in joining the Newsletter Committee.

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