

The Peggy Browning Fund

Educating Law Students on the Rights and Needs of Workers

Joseph Lurie, President

Mary Anne Moffa, Executive Director

Jonathan Harris Reports on His Fellowship

What Would You Do - Stand Up for Your Rights, or Be Deported?

Peggy Browning Fellow Urges Systemic Change

I worked last summer at CASA de Maryland, a worker center/service provider for Latino residents of Maryland. I worked as a union and community organizer for six years before law school, so I was already familiar with the effects of immigration status on workplace rights.

In the Trenches

This summer put me in the trenches dealing directly with legal problems that workers face as a result of heightened immigration enforcement. Part of my job was counseling day laborers, construction workers, restaurant workers and housekeepers about typical problems at the worksite, like health and safety issues, wage and hour violations and respect on the job.

I also worked on a broader campaign against Verizon, to pressure the company into forcing its subcontractors to pay wages owed to laborers. There

were more than 40 day laborers digging trenches for the Verizon Fios project in suburban Maryland and Virginia, and they were owed money from Verizon's subcontractors.

Many subcontractors refused to pay. CASA thought that Verizon could play a role, so I helped to organize a protest outside of Verizon headquarters.

About 150 people showed up at that protest. Verizon agreed that afternoon to meet with the unpaid workers. As a result, since I left, those workers have recovered over \$50,000 in unpaid wages from the subcontractor.

Early-Morning Raids

Another part of organizing with immigrant communities came up in midsummer – a workplace raid by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), at a painting services center in Annapolis, MD. At 5 a.m., ICE officials broke in to company housing, detained



46 workers and their family members at gunpoint and dragged them out of their homes.

The first thing that people did was call CASA de Maryland, because it's known as a community center that works directly with Latino immigrants and lobbies against these kind of raids that destroy families and that destroy workplace rights. At CASA's legal department, we dropped what we were doing so we could help.

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Fulbright Scholarship Awarded To Peggy Browning Fellow

"Once in a Lifetime Opportunity" for Julie Polakoski

Julie's email arrived late on April 1, but it was no April Fool's joke. She wrote to let us know that she was chosen to be a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand.



As a Fulbright Scholar, she'll be doing research in comparative labor law and collective bargaining rights and hopes to earn her LLM degree. The scholarship will cover all of her costs – travel, living expenses, tuition, stipends, etc. Julie says she "couldn't be happier."

In 2008, Julie was hired as a Peggy Browning Fellow at the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in Washington, DC. Julie attends Penn State University, Dickinson School of Law. Until her Fulbright scholarship starts in early 2010, Julie is finishing law school and a clerkship at the NLRB Contempt Litigation branch and then will study for the NY bar exam. When she returns

home from New Zealand, she hopes to work for one of the NLRB's regional offices.

Julie told PBF Executive Director Mary Anne Moffa, "I wanted to thank you and the Peggy Browning Fund for helping me with my career path in labor law. I had a tremendous experience as a Fellow, and it really inspired me to continue on with it. The Teamsters wrote my recommendation for the Fulbright Scholarship and were incredibly encouraging about the process. I would love to recommend them and the Contempt Branch at the Board as a placement for anyone considering a Peggy Browning Fellowship."

What Do Chris Shelton, Gwynne Wilcox, & Anna Burger Have in Common?

Honorees Issue Challenge to Rebuild the Labor Movement

The latest recipients of the Peggy Browning Fund Award have much in common, not the least of which is their optimism for the future of the labor movement.

These **champions of social and economic justice** have left indelible marks on the labor movement. They have inspired a new and diverse generation of young labor advocates. And they're not finished yet.

On January 28, friends of the Fund gathered at the Yale Club of New York City to honor Christopher Shelton, Vice President of CWA District One, and Gwynne A. Wilcox, Esq., of Levy Ratner, P.C.

Gwynne Wilcox has devoted her legal career to championing the rights of unions and working people and promoting diversity in the legal profession. She is a rare combination of zealous legal advocate, top-notch educator and caring mentor.

As she thanked her numerous clients for allowing her the opportunity to serve them, Gwynne noted, "It's just been such a privilege over the years to represent workers and represent unions."

Gwynne also discussed the wide-

"I realize that diversity is a work in progress, but it's so important that we increase the number of black, Latino and Asian attorneys who will better reflect the working people in this country. ... I charge each and every one of us to think about how we can expand the possibilities and opportunities so that diversity can be successfully attained."

- Gwynne A. Wilcox

ranging challenges of working in public interest labor law and the critical importance of increasing diversity in the ranks of those who represent working people. She told the many students in the audience, "If you want to do something interesting and exciting, this is the field to be in!"

Chris Shelton leads the largest and most diverse District in the CWA, with 180,000 members in over 300 Locals. His life's work has produced a great standard of living for his members. He's a fine example for all of us.

Chris acknowledged the people who helped him get where he is today – his staff, the members and officers of his

"I believe the labor movement should be giving the Peggy Browning Fund awards, because of the vital work that you do for the labor movement."

- Chris Shelton

union, and the many lawyers he has relied upon over the years.

Chris predicted that the Employee Free Choice Act will be passed by Congress and signed by President Obama. When that happens, he said, "We will need even more labor lawyers on the union side, because the dark side will never let us rest. They will attack the Employee Free Choice Act in every avenue that they can attack it, and we need enough lawyers to make sure that we can out-lawyer their lawyers!"

On March 19, supporters gathered in Philadelphia to honor Anna Burger, Chair of the labor federation Change to Win and International Secretary-Treasurer of the 2-million member SEIU, the nation's largest union. Throughout her career, she has pushed labor to deepen its commitment to equality for all.

In accepting the award, Anna spoke about how Peggy Browning inspired people and made a difference in their lives, both on a personal level and from her brilliant use of the law. Anna said that Peggy "lives on because of all of the work that you do in giving opportunity to young, aspiring lawyers, to understand what our movement is and can be."

Anna praised the importance of lawyers in challenging the status quo and giving voice to "people who are left in the shadows."

Although she ruefully acknowledged that "every single day of my working life our labor movement has gotten smaller and smaller," she pointed to

"We inherited a labor movement that was strong and powerful, that gave us the opportunity to have a great life, and it is our responsibility to make sure that our labor movement is as strong for the next generation."

- Anna Burger

the current opportunity to change that and concluded, "I don't think that I have ever been as excited as I am right now."

Anna went on to say, "We need to change the laws to make a difference. ... We can, in fact, rebuild the labor movement. ... We can make the law what it used to be. ... **Can you imagine what it would be like if Pennsylvania once again had 1 in 3 workers in the union?**"

Our Peggy Browning Fellows certainly can, and so can the hundreds of students who attend our annual National Law Students' Workers Rights Conference.

Can you?

Seven Things Students Like About Peggy Browning Fellowships

Your Contributions Made This Possible

Access to practicing labor law attorneys, opportunity to network with other students who are interested in labor law, variety of work projects and experiences, **broad exposure to labor law/union issues.**



- Danielle Davis,
Howard University School of Law,
United Mine Workers of America

I was given the opportunity to excel by building an investigation from the beginning affidavit, all the way to recommending action before the regional director. In addition, I was given broad discretion in managing both the Charging Party's attorney and Charged Party's attorney to negotiate potential settlements.



- Brendan Keough,
University of Mississippi School of Law, NLRB Region 5

I was most impressed by the **variety of projects and responsibilities** I was allowed to participate in. I was involved in everything from intake at clinics to writing motions to participating in meetings with the Illinois Attorney General's office.

- Linda Imonode,
University of Arizona School of Law,
Working Hands Legal Clinic

I loved the amount of **hands-on experience** I obtained learning the law. Unlike my fellow classmates, I was able to meet with actual clients. I was able to see where my effort and work was going and its outcome.

- Nadia Abdelkhalek,
Villanova University School of Law,
Community Legal Services

The Fund provided great **networking opportunities and events for students**, which is so important for attorneys starting out in labor law who might otherwise feel like an island in a sea of corporate attorneys.



- Caitlin Bergo,
George Washington University Law School, NLRB Contempt Litigation & Compliance Branch

My mentor gave me opportunities to be a part of meetings, to prepare witnesses, take part in bargaining sessions, and attend board meetings. This experience was invaluable in that **I got to see the behind-the-scenes workings of a labor union** and saw projects from start to near-finish. By the end of the internship, I had a better sense of how unions function, the role of the National Labor Relations Board, and a better understanding of legal procedures.

- Jun Lim,
University of Oregon School of Law,
Chicago Newspaper Guild



My summer experience was absolutely wonderful! ... My experience has **truly inspired me to continue to work within the labor movement!**

- Lindsay Nicholas,
University of California,
Hastings College of the Law,
UNITE HERE Local 2

Visit our website to read more feedback from Peggy Browning Fellows.

YOU can make it possible for more law students to learn about workers' rights. It's easy:

Use the enclosed response envelope to mail in your gift, or donate via our website:

www.peggybrowningfund.org/donations.html

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I interviewed the detainees to find out about possible constitutional violations that ICE had committed in the raid as well as any wage and hour violations by their employer. Not getting paid for their last paycheck, for example, happens a lot in these raids.

I also interpreted for lawyer meetings with detainees and helped track the status of the cases to find out how we could help people locked in these immigration detention centers. It's amazing that law enforcement could carry out a non-criminal raid against families who are only here to work.

These workplace raids are now all too common and increasing everyday. Labor must take a clear stand against them. In addition to the raids, anti-immigrant hate crimes are on the rise.

READ MORE about our programs and our students at www.peggybrowningfund.org

Demanding a Voice at Work

We opened our doors every Monday to give free legal referrals to community members. A lot of these dealt with wage and hour violations. In some cases, I helped workers negotiate a payment plan with their bosses; in others, I helped workers file complaints with the Maryland Department of Labor for unpaid wages.

While it felt good to help some individual workers, I also was reaffirmed in my belief that we need systemic change in employment laws. **Organizing for a union contract is the best way for workers to increase their rights on the job.**

This internship gave me a chance to test my abilities and reflect on where I see myself continuing in the movement for social justice, worker rights, and union rights after finishing law school.

I appreciate all of you who contribute

“Undocumented workers face greater risks when demanding a voice at work. Not only are their jobs threatened but their very presence in this country is put in danger.”

— Jonathan Harris

to the Peggy Browning Fund, for making my experience last summer possible. I wouldn't have been able to do it without your support. And I really hope to see you, and work and build with all of you for many years to come.

(Editor's Note: Jonathan is completing his second year at CUNY School of Law. This article is excerpted from his remarks at our New York reception in January 2009.)

Upcoming Events – Mark Your Calendars

Watch our website for details.

June 10, 2009 – Join the Peggy Browning Fund in honoring **Donald J. Capuano, Esq.**, senior partner with O'Donoghue & O'Donoghue, LLP, in Washington, DC.

October 16 & 17, 2009 – The Peggy Browning Fund's eleventh annual **National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference**, at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD. The Keynote Speaker will be NLRB Chairman **Wilma B. Liebman**.

November, 2009 – Join the Peggy Browning Fund in honoring **Terrence J. Hancock**, Vice President of Teamsters Joint Council 25 and President of Teamsters Local 731, and **Ronald E. Powell**, President of Local 881 UFCW and UFCW International Vice President, in Chicago, IL.

Your gifts – and our programs – are giving unique opportunities to law students.



Photographer: Michael Persico

Shown here: 2008 PBF Fellow Mary Clark, Chair of Change to Win/PBF Honoree Anna Burger, 2009 PBF Fellows Grace Lim and Tim Beckel.

The official registration and financial information of The Peggy Browning Fund may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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