

Educating Law Students on the Rights and Needs of Workers

2014 Summer Fellows

Bring Diversity to the Labor Movement

Formative experiences within her family's history in the United States have led Chi-Ser, the eldest child of Khmer Rouge refugees, to pursue a career advocating for underserved communities. Having grown up under the veil of threats of violence to her family's Chinese takeout restaurant in West Philadelphia, she remembers that it did not always feel like the "City of Brotherly Love." From a young age, the responsibility fell to Chi-Ser to help her parents navigate countless legal and financial issues.

Over the years, she witnessed many immigrant families face challenges due to their limited English proficiency, cultural misunderstandings, and unfamiliarity with navigating certain legal rights. Throughout her work experience, Chi-Ser has consistently sought opportunities at direct-service, national policy, and civil rights organizations. Through her work and volunteer experiences, she developed a critical understanding of systemic issues and the need for adequate access to legal rights and resources.

During her undergraduate years at New York University, she was a voting rights intern, documenting Asian American voting patterns and barriers, monitoring poll sites, conducting exit polls during



At a 2008 voter registration drive in New York City, Chi-Ser is second from the right.

the 2008 Presidential Election, and conducting volunteer trainings for youth groups in New York City. Chi-Ser became a Voting Rights Organizer for the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), where she coordinated a 14-state multilingual exit poll project (Asian American Election Protection Project) managing the recruitment, training, and placement of over 850 volunteers who surveyed more than 9,000 Asian American voters during the 2012 Presidential Election. This was the largest project of its kind

to-date. This project culminated in the filing of voting rights complaints with various government agencies, as well as her public testimonies before the New York City Council and the NYC Voter Assistance Advisory Committee.

Chi-Ser now hopes to apply her considerable experience and skills to benefit the needs of workers. She is a 1L student at the Temple University Beasley School of Law and will work as a Peggy Browning Fellow in the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Solicitor in Philadelphia, PA.

"My experiences demonstrate my passion to serve and advocate on behalf of marginalized communities. This summer I am prepared to further develop the legal skills to become a more effective advocate for social justice."

- Chi-Ser Tran, PBF '14



Margaret A. (Peggy) Browning

A Beacon for Workers' Rights

Our namesake was, by all accounts, an exceptional person whose life and qualities left their mark upon the legal community and on the national scene. Born in Tennessee and educated at Swarthmore and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Peggy was a creative and dynamic attorney.

While her name could have graced the masthead of any mega law firm, she chose to devote her energies to workers' rights. In her defense of workers' interests, she never lost a case in the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Peggy was tirelessly focused on issues such as union representation, fair and equal pay and decent working conditions.

Her achievements strongly justified President Clinton's nomination of her as the first union-side lawyer in history to be appointed to the National Labor Relations Board.

The Peggy Browning Award is presented annually to social justice champions who have distinguished themselves with passion and dedication to the rights and needs of workers and their families.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Peggy Browning Fund educates and inspires the next generation of advocates for workplace justice. Through fellowships, workers' rights conferences, networking and other programs, the PBF provides unique opportunities for law students to work for economic and social justice.

Regional Workshops

Expanding Our Program's Reach



Over the last few months, we have been planning several regional workshops for the fall semester. These workshops bring practitioners, academics, and former Peggy Browning Fellows to law schools all over the country to discuss the rewards of a career advancing the rights of workers. Thanks to the hard work of Board Members Richard Breaan and Gwynne Wilcox, six workshops have previously been coordinated. They have been well received by both students and facilitators.

The success of these workshops has confirmed to us that there is a hunger out there among progressive law students for support and encouragement as they seek careers advancing the cause of social and economic justice. These students don't always get this support at their law schools, where many students are

focused on more lucrative pursuits in corporate law, and with many law schools cutting back on teaching courses such as Labor Law.

The Peggy Browning Fund provides this support in many ways, through our Summer Fellowship Program, our National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference, networking opportunities and now through these regional workshops. We appreciate the support of the law schools, local practitioners and academics who have provided the venues and participated on panels for the regional workshops. But most of all, we appreciate your support of all of our programs, helping us to continue encouraging progressive law students by showing them that it is possible to embark on a fulfilling career in public interest labor law.

PBF, Board Chair

Facts About the Peggy Browning Fund

- 66 Summer Fellowships in 2014 from a pool of almost 400 applicants
- 568 Alumni (Not including 2014 Fellows)
- 145 Participating Law Schools
- 164 Alumni Working in Workers' Rights Labor Law
- 20 Union Mentors
- 68 Alumni Working in Public Interest Labor Law
- 17 Worker Center Mentors Orgs
- 9 Government Agency Mentor Orgs
- 1872 Students Who Have Attended PBF's National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference (1999 - 2013)
- 10 Union-side Law Firm Mentors

A Mentor's Prospective

*Evalynn Welling, Staff Attorney
Community Justice Project, Pittsburgh, PA*



*(L to R) Megan Walker, PBF '12,
Evalynn and Kimberly Bennett,
PBF '13*

Our small organization has benefitted greatly from the Peggy Browning Fund Summer Fellowship Program by enabling us to expand our capacity to serve immigrant and low income workers. This program makes it possible to find students who are driven

by the desire to work in employment litigation and have the skills needed to support complex litigation. **Our past Summer Fellows, from many different states, have brought a wide variety of talents, languages, and experience.**

This year we obtained funding for a law graduate to work on wage cases who had been a PBF Summer Fellow two years ago. While interviewing for our present Summer Fellow, an extremely well qualified PBF applicant offered to volunteer his services, even though he was not chosen. This means that this summer we have a Peggy Browning alumnus, a current Summer Fellow, and a person that we found through the PBF all working on immigrant wage issues! We greatly appreciate the PBF!!

Advocating for Workplace Justice

Support Progressive Law Students

Newly branded "Advocating for Workplace Justice," regional workshops introduce law students to PBF's Summer Fellowship Program and to the benefits of practicing labor law. The pilot workshop, held in February 2013 in Pittsburgh, was planned by Richard Brean, Esq., General Counsel, United Steelworkers, PBF Board member and now Co-Chair of the Regional Workshop Committee. Since then five workshops have been held in Ann Arbor, Austin, Boston, Los Angeles and Newark, with an average attendance of 24 students.

Panelists include union leaders, labor and plaintiff lawyers, labor professors,

worker center directors, representatives from government agencies regulating the workplace and PBF alumni.

The last workshop was held on February 10, 2014 at Rutgers School of Law-Newark, where more than 20 students braved the snow to attend. The lead organizers of the workshop were moderator Gwynne A. Wilcox, Esq., Levy Ratner, P.C., PBF Board member and Co-Chair of the Regional Workshop Committee; and Co-Presidents Piel Lora and Meredith Wood Doherty of Rutgers' Labor and Employment Law Society. Eight more workshops are planned for this fall.



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*At the Rutgers-Newark workshop:
Bottom row (L to R) - Arnold
Shep Cohen, Megann McManus,
James Gray Pope
Top row (L to R) - Eric B.
Sposito, Gwynne A. Wilcox, Piel
Lora, Meredith Wood Doherty*

"The panel was excellent. It is inspiring to hear from people so passionate about labor law. The Peggy Browning Fellowship presents such impressive opportunities for those looking to pursue experiences in the field," says Michael R. Griffith, student, Rutgers School of Law-Newark.

2014 Alumni



**Briana Beltran,
PBF '09**
**Advocating for
Migrant Workers**

Briana's father arrived in the U.S. from Mexico when he was 12 and he spent most his younger years working as a farmworker with his family. While her life was different, she grew to understand the issues faced by immigrants in the U.S.

Since middle school, Briana has been involved in organizations that work for immigrant rights. In law school, she became a PBF Fellow at the National Day Laborer Organizing Network in Los Angeles. **"This was my first legal experience working with low-wage, immigrant workers and I was grateful to have had the support of the PBF,"** said Briana.

Today, Briana continues to represent migrant farmworkers as a staff attorney for Southern Migrant Legal Services in six states: AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, and TN. She assists with cases ranging from wage and hour issues to employment discrimination to trafficking. She's learned that forced-labor trafficking is not as highly reported as other trafficking in this country and it's difficult accessing responsive and receptive government services in the southern U.S. Among the challenges of representing the victims is there's not always a great or helpful answer to their problems.



**Matthew Blumin,
PBF '06**
**Mentoring PBF
Fellows**

While many Peggy Browning Fellows have a long family history of involvement in the labor movement, Matt Blumin is typical of many others. He got a small taste of organized labor as a teacher and a union member, but had no exposure to labor law until he became a PBF Fellow at the Department of Labor in Philadelphia. It was there Matt discovered that he really enjoyed labor law.

With fewer law schools teaching labor law, many students aren't exposed to the field. PBF fills that gap. **Matt also found that being a Peggy Browning Fellow sent a strong signal to potential employers that his commitment to workers' rights was serious.**

One of those employers was Friends of Farmworkers, another PBF mentor organization. After graduating from law school and completing two judicial clerkships, Matt entered a year-long fellowship with Friends of Farmworkers where, among other assignments, he supervised that year's PBF Fellow. He went on to become an associate at Bredhoff & Kaiser, PLLC in Washington, D.C., before moving to his current position as Associate General Counsel at AFSCME.

Matt is pleased to note that one of his former roommates will be a PBF Fellow this summer. He also looks forward to mentoring this year's PBF Fellows at AFSCME.



**Michael Gillman,
PBF '12**
**In Solidarity
With Workers**

With his inspiring 2012 summer fellowship at LIUNA behind him, Michael led a group of Notre Dame students to Immokalee, FL during Spring Break. There they marched in solidarity with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, an association of farmworkers fighting for just wages and working conditions.

"The Peggy Browning Fellowship provided me with everything I needed to jumpstart a career in union-side labor law. It was so refreshing to be within a community of people who shared a common commitment to social justice through the labor movement."

Michael Gillman, PBF '12

At his law school commencement, Michael was presented with the David T. Link Award for outstanding service in the field of social justice and the ABA/Bloomberg BNA Award for Excellence in the Study of Labor and Employment Law. In addition, he received the Sister Jean Lenz Award, which is given annually to a graduate student who displays leadership in promoting a more diverse, inclusive campus community for students.

After graduation Michael returned to his home state and joined the union-side labor law firm of Sugarman & Susskind, PA in Miami, FL. His practice focuses solely on the representation of working people, their unions, and their benefit funds.

"I'm happy to continue to spread the word about Peggy Browning Fund programs. It's so important that PBF exists for the future of the labor movement!"

Matthew Blumin, PBF '06

Highlights

Julie Polakoski-Rennie, PBF '08

From an International Perspective

After law school, Julie became a Fulbright Scholar at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. There she conducted research in international comparative labor law studying the impacts of legal reform on the collective bargaining rights of blue-collar workers in New Zealand and the U.S.

She then began working for the Finsec Union organizing bank and finance workers. That's where she met her husband, and then moved to the U.S., where she started her career at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Regional 2.

As a board agent/field attorney, Julie actively enforces the National Labor Relations Act before Administrative



Julie Polakoski-Rennie, PBF'08, (center) participating in a demonstration with the Finsec Union, Wellington, New Zealand in 2011.

Law Judges and in federal district court. She investigates allegations of unfair labor practices under the Act and makes recommendations to their regional director, as well as writing pre- and post-election

decisions for the Region. She notes that she is continuously learning and being challenged in this enforcement role, particularly since the NLRB's Manhattan office is one of the busiest in the country.

"I had not realized, prior to my fellowship, all that a labor law attorney does . . . The entire experience made me more passionate about an area of law to which I am planning to devote my legal career."

Julie Polakoski-Rennie, PBF '08

Leadership Circle

Supports All Programs

The Leadership Circle affords donors the opportunity to make one annual leadership-level gift per year that would support all PBF's programs. Members are recognized at all annual receptions, at the National Conference, in our newsletters and on our website. To join the Leadership Circle, contact Rhonda Gelman Kelley, CFRE, Director of Development and Marketing at 267-273-7994 or rkelley@peggybrowningfund.org.

The Peggy Browning Fund gratefully acknowledges the following annual Leadership Circle donors:

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San Francisco Awards Reception

Continues to Grow



San Francisco Awardees (L to R) David Rosenfeld, Esq. of Weinberg, Roger and Rosenfeld; Mike Garcia, President, SEIU United Service Workers West and the Hon. Joseph Grodin, arbitrator

San Francisco Award Reception Sponsors

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Ronald Yank

On February 13, Northern California's labor community came together at the Holiday Inn Golden Gateway to celebrate the achievements of Mike Garcia, President of SEIU United Service Workers West; David Rosenfeld, Esq.

of Weinberg, Roger and Rosenfeld; and the Hon. Joseph Grodin, Distinguished Emeritus Professor of UC Hastings College of the Law. **2011 Peggy Browning Fellow, Sonya Mehta, lit up the crowd as she spoke passionately**

about her fellowship experience at UNITE HERE! Local 2. On behalf of this year's Peggy Browning Fellows, we extend our thanks to the awardees, the Host Committee and all our reception sponsors for their support.

New York Awards Reception

A Heartfelt Affair



New York Awardees (L to R) Hezekiah Brown, arbitrator; Richard Levy, Esq. of Levy Ratner, PC and Terry Moore, Business Manager, Local 46 Metallic Lathers Union

On April 8, over 350 guests came together at the Sheraton NY Times Square Hotel to recognize the dedication of 3 social justice champions of the New York labor community. Recognized for their passion and dedication to the rights and needs of workers and their families were Terry Moore, Business Manager, Local 46 Metallic Lathers Union; Richard Levy, Esq. of Levy Ratner, PC and Hezekiah Brown, arbitrator.

What made this reception so special was the genuine love and devotion those attending showed for all three

awardees. Each had a very special story to tell and each story was very well-received.

Sharing her 2012 Summer Fellowship experience at Make the Road New York was Evamaria Kartzian. She shared how early in her law school years she was advised to not pursue a career in labor law because the labor movement was dying. "I'm so glad that I didn't heed that advice because the Peggy Browning Fund inspired me to believe that the labor movement still has some fight in it!"

Philadelphia Awards Reception

A Memorable Evening



Philadelphia Awardees (L to R) Walt Higgins, Business Manager, Laborers Local Union 57; Pat Bianculli, Esq. of IBEW Local 98 and Alan Symonette, Esq., arbitrator

This year's Philadelphia Awards Reception was not only memorable because those being recognized were so deserving or because our U.S. Senator spoke so passionately. **It was a memorable evening because all of the awardees personally knew Peggy Browning and spoke about**

her impact on the Philadelphia labor community.

Recognized for their dedication to workers rights were Walt Higgins, Business Manager, Laborers' Local Union 57; Pat Bianculli, Esq. of IBEW Local 98 and Alan Symonette, Esq., arbitrator, on March 20th at Penn's

Landing Caterers. The program began with special remarks from U.S. Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

2012 Peggy Browning Fellow Vanessa Stine shared highlights of her Summer Fellowship experience at Friends of Farmworkers in Philadelphia.

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Wednesday, June 18, 2014

AFL-CIO Lobby & Gompers Room
815 Sixteenth Street, Washington, DC

For more information visit www.peggybrowningfund.org/events
Or call 267-273-7994

SAVE THE DATES!

2014 National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference

Keynote Speaker



Nancy Schiffer
Member, NLRB

October 17 & 18

The Conference Center at
the Maritime Institute
Linthicum Heights, MD

For more information, contact
Mary Anne Moffa, Executive Director
267-273-7992

September 12

Regional Workshop – Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

September 23

Regional Workshop – Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

October 17

Summer Fellows Wrap-Up Workshop