

Educating Law Students on the Rights and Needs of Workers

Summer Fellows Play A Key Role in Labor's Future

Bringing New Energy and Skills

This summer, sixty-six law students became Peggy Browning Fellows and embarked on a ten-week program at unions, union-side law firms, worker centers, U.S. Department of Labor and NLRB to learn more about a career in labor law. Helki Philipsen, a third-year student at the University of Maryland School of Law, shared the following experience:

During my fellowship I achieved my goal to improve my legal research and writing skills, having worked on a broad range of issues such as pension reform, First Amendment rights of public employees, workers' comp, representing the union as an employer in arbitration, ethical considerations in multijurisdictional practice, the right to organize inside correctional facilities, and sexual harassment law.

One of the projects from which I benefited most was drafting a memo regarding the First Amendment rights of a public employee running against his boss for public office. This was the second memorandum I wrote on the topic, and it was exciting to go into a project feeling knowledgeable and prepared. **Part of the reason I felt so well-prepared was because my supervising attorney took the time to review my first memo and help me to improve not only my writing, but my legal reasoning and**



Summer Fellows at AFSCME, (L to R) Ify Odunukwe and Helki Philipsen at a rally in Washington, DC addressing the rural healthcare crisis.

understanding of the case law.

Another project focused on the Detroit bankruptcy, cataloguing all the personal objections that had been filed, the majority by retirees facing drastic cuts to their pensions and benefits. Since this was an historic event, I felt privileged to work on it in any capacity. It also gave me the opportunity to hear the concerns of working men and women in their own words. Although it didn't require legal expertise per se, this was one of the most informative experiences I had all summer and made me feel closer to

the people we are trying to help as labor lawyers.

My summer experience made me realize that labor law is something I can actually do. I gained a greater understanding of how the labor movement works and became more motivated to advocate on behalf of working men and women. Everyone I encountered was welcoming, enthusiastic and encouraged me to pursue a career in the field, offering to help me along the way. I've not experienced the same spirit of collaboration and camaraderie in any other field of law.

"Many of the projects Helki handled supported AFSCME's core priorities this summer, especially maintaining retirement security for our members by protecting defined benefit pensions. She clearly understood the importance of that issue and was committed to it. The number of retirees who potentially stand to benefit from her work on that issue alone number in the tens of thousands."

Matthew Blumin, Associate General Counsel, AFSCME, PBF'06



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.

2014 Fellows: Inspired and Committed



Since 1997 the Peggy Browning Fund has been growing and making a demonstrable impact on legal education and the labor movement. Our success can be attributed to an active and concerned

Board of Directors, a reliable group of supporters, a dedicated staff and law students from around the country - especially the law students. They are our fellows, national conference attendees and, this year, attendees at 10 regional workshops around the country.

Peggy Browning Fellows are bright, passionate and progressive. They enter the program with an interest in working to protect workers' rights and by the end are motivated to make this their ambition in the practice of law.

As part of our program we require both the fellow and the mentor organization to submit a "feedback report." Reviewing these reports provides us

with vital information for planning next year's program.

This newsletter's cover story on Helki Philipsen is augmented by the following comments from her feedback report:

"I wasn't sure what I was going to do after school until my involvement with the Peggy Browning Fund gave me direction and purpose. In addition to giving me a great summer, AFSCME offered to keep me on as a law clerk for the upcoming school year! For the first time I feel like I'm prepared to start a career when I graduate."

As we see the development of our fellows into stalwart supporters of the labor movement, we take comfort that all our hard work and your generous support is worth our commitment.



Leadership Circle *Supports All Programs*

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

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National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference

16th Annual Event Well-Received By All



Saturday plenary session speakers (L to R) Sarah Slavick, Lesley University College of Art & Design; John Barry, Maryland Institute College of Art; Marley Weiss, moderator, Professor of Law, University of Maryland and Saerom Park, SEIU Law Fellow and PBF'11.

On a perfect fall weekend, 159 students from 93 law schools gathered for PBF's 16th annual National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference, held at the Conference Center at the Maritime Institute near Baltimore, MD.

After two days packed with workshops, plenary sessions, panel discussions, and networking, they left asking for more. "Insightful." "Informative." "Inspiring." **"Do this every year!"** These are just a few of the comments made by those who attended.

Opening with a lively networking dinner and a spirited discussion about organizing low-wage workers, United Steelworkers General Counsel Rich Brean moderated a panel that included UFCW General Counsel George

Wiszynski; Pittsburgh union-side attorney Mike Healey; SEIU Organizer Rob Berger; 2014 PBF Fellow Rocío Albarrán; and fast food workers Andrew Miller and Jose Torres. They discussed the Our Walmart, Clean Carwash, Fast Food Workers and Minimum Wage Campaigns.

A plenary session on Saturday afternoon, *Adjunct Faculty Organizing as a Response to Precarious Work*, followed up on Friday night's panel from a different angle. Many students spoke afterward of how much insight they gained into how professional staff are increasingly facing the same issues as low-wage workers.

Keynote speaker Nancy Schiffer talked about her journey to her current position as a Member of the National Labor Relations Board, as well as some current issues before the Board. She stressed the need for committed young lawyers to work in the labor movement, and she lingered afterward to speak with the many students who sought her advice.

Judging by the anonymous feedback forms completed by students, as well as by their enthusiasm throughout, this year's conference was one of our most successful.

One aspect most frequently cited by students was the opportunity for networking both with other students and with the stellar lineup of speakers and workshop facilitators. Many

2014 Conference Sponsors

Program

IBEW Local 11

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Laborers Eastern Region Organizing Fund

Session

United Auto Workers

Workshop

American University Washington
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USW Local 10-00086

commented on how much they learned from each other and on their plans to stay in touch once they return to school.

We are especially grateful to the nearly three dozen professionals who volunteered their time to plan and carry out this year's conference. One particularly gratifying element this year was the increasing participation of PBF alumni, including Wala Blegay and Isela Ramos on the Conference Planning Committee, and Rocío Albarrán, Dan Flaherty, Saerom Park, and Chris Williamson, who participated in various panels and workshops. Students commented on how encouraging they found this input from others who were so recently in law school.



Friday evening panel discussion moderated by Rich Brean, (Center) USW General Counsel and PBF Board member.

2014 Fellow



Angaza Mayo-Laughinghouse
United Electrical
Radio & Machine
Workers of
America,
Pittsburgh, PA

"I feel as though my political and social consciousness has grown by leaps and bounds as a result of my time with my co-workers."

Angaza Mayo-Laughinghouse,
North Carolina Central University
School of Law

What I enjoyed most about my summer experience was simply being in the presence of such intelligent and wise veteran activists and organizers. Many of my co-workers had been working in the labor movement for decades. I had heard of some of them as a child, but this was my first time meeting them. I would listen to their stories of past campaigns, tactics, victories, and losses. As I sat at my desk, I would listen and learn from their assessments of current events, international struggles, and historical moments soaking up every ounce of wisdom and knowledge they shared.

Although I came from a small university and had never taken a labor law course, my colleagues helped me to see that there are many opportunities for law students to be effective advocates for rank and file workers and people of color.



Olivia Singer
Greater Boston
Legal Services

My experience at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) far exceeded my expectations. I was given my own client load and the opportunity to really participate in the legal process. I represented clients in unemployment benefits hearings, giving me a chance to practice my oral advocacy skills and build client relationships. **Through my work with a Spanish speaking client, I was able to confront the difficulties that Limited English Proficiency (LEP) clients face navigating the U.S. employment maze.** After investigating language access at career service centers throughout the state, I helped draft a Title VI complaint to the Department of Career Services and the Department of Unemployment Assistance.

"I was inspired by the work of the Employment Unit team at GBLS and now feel committed to working with LEP clients to improve access to public benefits and ensure they are informed of their rights."

Olivia Singer,
Northeastern University
School of Law



Leo Gertner
United
Steelworkers,
Pittsburgh, PA

The breadth of the issues I worked on, supervised by attorneys with experience in the labor movement, was incredible. **I knew that I was working on issues that would have a direct impact on workers.** USW's General Counsel, Rich Brean, also spent a great deal of time with us explaining USW's history and the importance of bringing attorneys into the labor movement. The staff at USW is an amazing group of people truly dedicated to making life better for workers.

I also saw the importance of PBF's network of alumni and current fellows. Several USW attorneys were former fellows. One alum, Moshe Marvit, *PBF'09*, reached out to us and took us to dinner. I am incredibly fortunate to have had this experience and look forward to continuing to work hard to promote the work of the USW and PBF.



Summer Fellow Tom Power went with staff and supporters of the Workers Defense Project in Austin, TX, in a direct action to improve working conditions at construction projects across the state.



Citlalli Ochoa, second from left, with staff from the Employment Justice Project in Washington, DC, organizers and workers at a rally outside the Wilson Building where the DC Council voted to increase the minimum wage.

Highlights



Sarah Padway
Federal Mine
Safety and
Health Review
Commission,
Washington, DC

This summer I worked for an administrative law judge with the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. Due to changes within the Commission, I became my Judge's interim clerk for the summer with the main focus of researching a discrimination case on my judge's docket. I conducted research regarding how the Mine Act intersects with traditional labor law issues and the NLRA, and who has jurisdiction over which issues.

With close communication with my Judge and the Judicial Assistant, I was able to quickly learn what needed to be done. After reviewing the Mine Act, I was surprised at how heavily regulated the mining industry is. **I had a very productive summer and learned a lot about mining and labor law. I also felt that I was able to make an impact.**



John Festa
Chicago
Newspaper Guild

The one event of my fellowship that left the biggest impression was taking part in my first picket line. A manufacturing company operating on the west side of Chicago since 1947 had employees averaging 22 years, and some well over 40. The workers are represented by Teamsters Local 743, and their staff by the Newspaper Guild. The parent company announced they would close the plant at the end of October and move the line to Texas. They would not pay severance and would not meet with the union and the city to discuss alternatives to closing.

The call went out and we showed up to walk a picket line. Union leaders revved up the crowd. A 40-year Teamster retiree was there to help. **"It didn't really strike me then but now I realize the importance of unions having people like this man, who still shows up to help his Teamster brothers and sisters."**



*Andrea Obando
Murphy*
Anderson PLLC,
Washington, DC

While it was initially intimidating to be the only summer law clerk at the firm, everyone was so helpful and responsive that I never felt bad for asking too many questions. **I was able to work with all of the attorneys at one point or another, and I think that was just as valuable as all of the work that I did.** I definitely learned something valuable from each of them.

Before this summer, I wasn't sure that a firm was really where I wanted to be, because I thought I wanted to do more impact litigation and direct services work. I went to Murphy Anderson so that I could find out if that was another path that I could take. After my experience this summer, I can definitely see myself working at a plaintiff-side firm in the future.



Becky Cassler, on right, with NELP co-workers Becki Smith and Diego Rondón Ichikawa, at the Seattle City Council's final debate and unanimous vote in favor of a gradual minimum wage increase to \$15/hour.

Facts About the Peggy Browning Fund

66 Summer Fellows

148 Participating Law Schools

55 Mentor Organizations

632 Alumni

2,030 Law Students Attending Nat'l Conference since 1999

United Steelworkers and Peggy Browning Fund

A Close Relationship Over the Years

United Steelworkers (USW) and the Peggy Browning Fund have had a close relationship since the early years of PBF's existence. The dedication and excellence of USW's Legal Department is well-known throughout the Labor Movement. Under the auspices of General Counsels Carl Frankel, Jim English, Paul Whitehead, and now Rich Brean, USW has been a mentor organization in our Summer Fellowship Program since 1999, providing 29 law students with this opportunity to learn that a career in labor law is a noble calling and a viable occupation.

In 2003, Rich joined PBF's Advisory Board and subsequently became a member of the Governing Board, serving on the Development Committee and Co-Chairing the Regional Workshops Committee. Rich brings real passion

to mentoring USW's Summer Fellows commenting, **"We try to give everyone a real sense of what it means to represent workers, and my greatest joy is helping our Fellows find jobs with union-side firms."**

His dedication and leadership led to the first Regional Workshop in 2012 held at the University of Pittsburgh and moderated by Rich with 34 students in attendance. Based on this success, PBF's Board approved 3 more workshops in 2013 and 10 in 2014 at law schools around the country.

Over the years, USW has supported PBF's mission with leadership-level gifts, thanks to the remarkable dedication of USW International President Leo W. Gerard who further pledged his support by becoming a PBF Honorary Board member.



PBF Board member, Regional Workshops co-chair and moderator Rich Brean, General Counsel, United Steelworkers talking with law students at the first Regional Workshop at the University of Pittsburgh in 2012.

Union lawyers are a strong arm of the labor movement. Together, PBF and USW recognize the importance of molding the next generation of progressive lawyers to follow the great generation of union lawyers who now serve the labor movement.

Alumni Spotlight

Emil Totonchi, PBF '10-11



As the son of immigrant parents from Iraq and Ireland, Emil Totonchi has always been passionate about worker rights and social and economic justice. He became a Peggy Browning Fellow at the Chicago Newspaper Guild during his third year at ITT Chicago-Kent College of Law. Upon graduation, he worked at Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1. Emil shares, "Working with the Chicago Newspaper Guild was

a great opportunity to learn on-the-ground skills in both private and public sector labor law, which are both areas in which I currently practice."

After ten years in the labor movement, Emil began working in his current position as General Counsel to Teamsters Local 705 in Chicago, the second-largest Teamsters local in the country, representing 15,000 members. He works closely with Local 705 leaders, including Secretary-Treasurer Juan Campos, a veteran UPS 705 Teamster for 24 years.

About his current position, Emil says, **"My job is very gratifying because,**

as an in-house attorney, I interact with so many different kinds of people on a daily basis. The knowledge and experience gained from fighting on the front lines alongside working people, particularly as Local 705's lead counsel in litigation, make all the hard work worth it."

Emil hosts orientations for new Fellows in the Chicago area and stays connected with PBF alumni. "I encourage students to reach out to me and other practicing union attorneys for guidance or as mentors." Emil can be reached at etotonchi@L705ibt.org.

Washington, DC Awards Reception

An Evening of Empowerment



*U.S. Secretary of Labor
Thomas E. Perez addressing
our guests.*

On June 18th, hundreds of guests from around the country gathered to recognize three outstanding leaders – J. David Cox, Sr., President, American Federation of Government Employees; Robert M. Weinberg, Bredhoff & Kaiser, PLLC and Lafe Solomon of the National Labor Relations Board. The AFL-CIO

lobby was bustling with excitement and appreciation for each awardee and the contributions they've made to the labor movement.

2006 Peggy Browning alum Matt Blumin spoke passionately about his fellowship at the U.S. Department of Labor. The evening's special guest speaker, U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez, delivered an empowering speech, especially noting this year's Fellows: **"Today's recipients (of Peggy Browning Fellowships) are tomorrow's labor leaders and there is a bright future for those labor leaders across this country. We need you today, we need you tomorrow, we need you for generations to come – because there is unfinished business and with your help we are going to move that ball down the field."**

Our thanks to the awardees, the Host Committee and all our sponsors for helping to make this event a success!

Washington, DC Award Reception Sponsors

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"Advocating for Workplace Justice" Regional Workshops

Outreach Proves Student Interest

Collaboration was king at Howard University School of Law's regional workshop, held September 17, resulting in the biggest turnout yet for a PBF workshop, with 103 students. Planned by Homer C. La Rue, Arbitrator and Professor of Law, and his 20-member planning committee, the workshop started with opening remarks from Howard Law's Dean, Danielle Holley-Walker. Moderated by Associate Dean Lisa Crooms-Robinson, the panel included esteemed members of the U.S. Department of Labor and National Labor Relations Board as well as former Peggy Browning Fellows.

The theme of 'Teamwork' continued at UCLA, Rutgers-Newark, Cornell, University of Michigan, Vanderbilt

and ITT Chicago-Kent law schools, where additional workshops were held. Panelists included union and union-side labor lawyers; labor professors; representatives from worker centers, the NLRB and PBF alumni. The final three workshops of the ten planned for 2014 will be at Tulane University Law School, University of Washington School of Law and Georgia State University College of Law.

PBF's Regional Workshops introduce law students to the practice of labor law and to our Summer



(L to R) Howard University panel with Dean Danielle Holley-Walker, Moderator Associate Dean Lisa Crooms-Robinson, Attorney Elizabeth Roma, NLRB Chair Mark Gaston Pearce, Erin Medeiros, PBF'12, Chris Wilkinson of the U.S. Dept. of Labor and Wynter Allen, PBF'05.

Fellowship opportunities. They also stimulate student interest in careers representing working people.

Peggy Browning Fund

Educating Law Students on the Rights and Needs of Workers

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Upcoming Events

Join Us As The Peggy Browning Award Is Presented To:



Randy Cammack

*Western Region
Vice President
International Brotherhood
of Teamsters*



Emma Leheny, Esq.

*General Counsel
California Teachers Association*



Sergio Rascón

*Vice President, LiUNA!
& Business Manager, LiUNA!
Local 300*



Wendell Young IV

*President,
UFCW Local 1776*



Joan Parker

*Arbitrator,
Mediator & Educator*

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Inaugural Los Angeles Awards Reception

LiUNA Local 300 Hall

2005 W. Pico Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90016

5:30 p.m. Networking, Open Bar and Buffet

7:15 p.m. Awards Presentations

March 2015

Philadelphia Awards Reception

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1301 S. Columbus Blvd. • Philadelphia, PA

5:45 p.m. – Networking, Open Bar and Buffet

7:15 p.m. – Award Presentations

More Information To Follow

To register for these receptions, visit www.peggybrowningfund.org/events

For more information, call 267-273-7994.