

Educating Law Students on the Rights and Needs of Workers

PBF's First Set of Twins had Similar Summer Fellowships

Continuing to Pursue Careers as Workers' Rights Advocates

This summer, 81 law students from across the country had different office requirements but were able to gain a good sense of accomplishment advocating for workers' rights. Some completed their fellowships in their home offices, and some worked from their mentor's office and some did both.

For the first time, PBF placed a set of twins from Harvard Law School at two different mentor organizations.

Growing up in a small town in Ohio, Jason and Kevin Vazquez had a history of working with social justice organizations. Jason was chosen to work at Greater Boston Legal Services and Kevin at TakeRoot Justice in New York.

Jason worked in the Employment Law Unit where he witnessed the sickness, death, and economic dislocation inflicted by the coronavirus, and the poverty and inequities that it intensified. His time was devoted to direct client service in wage and benefits cases, and he advised, represented, and assisted dozens of individual clients who hailed from all over the world.

The many hours he spent engaged with these clients exposed him freshly and vividly to the often-brutal existence endured by the working poor. Being so closely exposed to the daily struggles of his clients, and feeling, at times, so powerless, even as a representative of the legal system, to do anything to help them, has reaffirmed his commitment to challenging an economic system that produces such extreme inequities and subjects so many to lives of deprivation and hardship. Jason found the work to often be frustrating and perplexing, but always rewarding and inspiring.



Kevin, left, and Jason, right, twin brothers in PBF Summer Fellowships

Jason generally has been more interested in labor law and the power of collective bargaining than employment law and direct legal services, but he found the direct client work invigorating and rewarding.

Kevin's objectives for the summer were to fight for economic justice, build community and worker power, contribute to grassroots organizing, and develop an understanding of movement lawyering. He accomplished all that and more, working with domestic workers, restaurant workers, or temporary construction workers, many of whom were undocumented immigrants.

One of the most egregious cases involved an undocumented "live-in" domestic worker who worked seven days a week and received only \$50 in compensation. Through a combination

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"Witnessing the abuse and exploitation that my clients experienced and working against the systemic obstacles put in place to prevent them from vindicating their legal rights even further convinced me that a strong labor movement is necessary to build worker power, redistribute wealth, and eradicate poverty," noted Jason Vazquez.



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.

Transitions can be Challenging

PBF is Rising to Meet Them



Our biennial Chicago Awards Reception is always a joyous event, bringing together union activists and lawyers to honor beloved members of Chicago's labor community. As always, we will be gathering at a UNITE HERE Local 1 hotel, this time the Sheraton Grand, on November 9th. But this year there will be something very special about the fact that we'll be able to shake hands and hug one another because the Chicago event will be our very first in-person reception since the Spring of 2020, and it will be the first event when we'll celebrate 25 years of recruiting law students for the labor movement.

PBF's main program, our Summer Fellowship Program, placed 81 law students this year in paid positions at union legal departments, law firms representing workers and unions, and public interest labor law organizations. Once again, these fellowships were mostly virtual and you can read about a few of their experiences in this newsletter.

These are times of transition in this country and at PBF. With the retirement of Mary Anne Moffa and the entry of Rachel Del Rossi as our new executive director, we are transitioning from one generation to the next.

Our country is currently in the midst of the largest transition of generational powers in American history. The Baby Boomers are retiring in record numbers and PBF alumni are well-positioned to meet the demand for new lawyers. Many of our alumni are already in powerful positions in government, union-side law firms and organizations that fight for workplace justice.

Over the next 25 years, we will continue to grow our impact by focusing on long term sustainability, supporting our alumni network more deeply and evolving our programming to focus on equity and community representation. With your continued support, PBF's future is a bright one.

Richard J. Brean, Chair
PBF Board of Directors

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23rd Annual Virtual National Conference was a Success!

Ending with a Commitment to the Future

By: Rachel Del Rossi, Executive Director

We did it! We wrapped our 23rd Annual Law Students Workers' Rights Virtual Conference! We must say, the future of the workers' rights movement is looking awfully bright! Between Friday Oct 15 and Sunday October 17, we hosted 40 unique sessions lead by over 70 field experts. These sessions ranged from large plenary sessions to interactive workshops, and small networking groups based on region, interest and affinity. The sessions were jam packed with practical information, inspiring labor successes, and calls to action that our participants were eager to follow.



Amara Blades, moderator, IUE-CWA/Peter Mitchell Labor Law Keynote Session

Attended by nearly 200 law students representing 80 different schools, this broad range united our work from coast to coast, from urban industrial cores to rural agricultural lands. **The students were incredibly diverse and each brought their unique perspective to the conference, and yet a feeling of solidarity and commitment felt palpable, even virtually.**

Thanks to our partners at the Southern University Law Center, the event was hosted on a virtual conference platform that was as close to in person as possible. In addition to our learning sessions, participants were able to interact in the virtual lounge and explore materials in the resource center. Each participant was provided a virtual 'briefcase' to collect materials and download when needed, including an overview of the

Peggy Browning Fund's Summer Fellowship Program.

Our sessions were intended to educate, inspire, and connect progressive law students with a passion for workers' rights. Our feedback so far has shown we have done just that. Additionally, there was a clear thread through nearly every session—lack of diversity and inclusion is an existential threat to workers rights. In order for anyone to move forward economically, it needs to include all of us. Solidarity has no room for bigotry.

The presenters and participants connected on this issue deeply, with acknowledgement of the limitations of the past and a commitment to a future where everyone has a seat at the table. As the Baby Boomers retire, and the torch is passed down the generational line, our whole world is shifting beneath our feet. Our best options for movement sustainability is connecting our past work to our future work, joining together with common purpose and shared vision.



Kelley Tyler, campaign co-chair, National Nurses United at Mission Hospital, Asheville, NC, shared how the campaign was organized.

Our incredible community of experts are enormously committed to those coming into the work today, which was felt by participants deeply. Participants commonly talked about how warm and friendly they found our presenters, and felt welcome to continue the conversation outside the virtual space. This is what the Peggy Browning Fund does best; we invest in the unlimited potential of the workers' rights movement by building bridges between our history and our future.



Attendees during the Keynote Session

2021 Fellowship



Renato Flores
Legal Aid at Work
San Francisco, CA

I had the pleasure of working with Legal Aid at Work (LAAW) in the Community Legal Services Program. As their counselor, I also worked in their Workers' Rights Clinic located throughout California. My goal was to gain a deeper understanding of employment law and to expand my network with other labor and employment attorneys. LAAW was a fantastic organization to help complete these objectives.

I gained knowledge of employment

law while assisting low income clients through the weekly clinics on issues from discrimination to unemployment insurance. I was also able to assist a client by representing him before the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board before an Administrative Law Judge. Being able to help that person struggling to get back on his feet and not dealing with an overpayment issue was a fantastic feeling.

During the clinics, I was able to network with labor and employment lawyers which ultimately led me to secure a clerk position for my third year with Outten & Golden in San Francisco.

Renato noted, that "A lot of the summer issues pertained exclusively to COVID-19 and the different laws that the California legislature was passing and how clients could benefit from those laws."



Summer Fellows Kenny Revoredo (left) and Viraj Patel (right) with mentor Marka Peterson at Strategic Organizing Center (formerly Change to Win) in Washington, DC



Sujata Bajracharya
National Treasury Employees Union
Washington, DC

This summer I was able to do a variety of work with both the Office of General Counsel and the D.C. field office. **I really enjoyed the variety of work and the fact that the position gave me the chance to see both appellate and trial arbitration-level work.**

I had one large overarching research memo project for the OGC, focused on the use of the All Writs Act to get emergency relief while cases go through the administrative process. I was also able to sit in on, or help with different field office cases, each at different stages and dealing with different issues affecting union members, from an EEOC race discrimination case to a challenge to an award denial.

Before this summer, I knew I was potentially interested in labor law, but was not sure whether litigation would be a good fit. Working with the OGC and the field office really gave me new insight into the wide variety of things that litigators can do and gave me confidence that litigation is an avenue that I am both interested in and that I could pursue going forward.

"I very much appreciated the chance to interact directly with union members, stewards, and chapter presidents, as it gave me a sense of the wide variety of agencies and types of employees that the union represents,"
shared Sujata.

Experiences



Summer Fellow Alexis Boyd (center) at an SEIU Domestic Care Workers Rally in Washington, DC



Tess Shelton

**Joel F. Dillard,
PA**

Jackson, MI

During my fellowship, I performed a wide variety of tasks, including interacting with clients; drafting documents for federal court; delivering opening and closing arguments for focus groups; and assisting the firm throughout a federal trial. **My supervisor made it clear on the first day that he wanted to provide me with a broad, hands-on learning experience.**

However, the highlight of my summer was attending and assisting my firm in a trial - a sexual harassment case in federal court against the Mississippi Attorney General's office. It was a stressful experience and we were all very emotionally invested in the client. I helped by taking notes on direct

Tess shared, "Bringing about that outcome for our client more than made up for all the stress and exhaustion. It was an indescribably rewarding experience."

and cross exams and keeping track of documents.

Every night, our firm prepared for the next day of trial. For me, that meant preparing exhibits, reviewing evidence, and drafting a cross-examination. All of our hard work paid off when the jury returned a \$750k verdict in our favor. Better still, the plaintiff finally felt vindicated after years of slander and gaslighting. Ultimately, my fellowship confirmed to me that I want to pursue a career advocating for workers.

"It is the measured, calculated, and creative approaches that can fell opposing counsel with far deeper coffers," noted Jacob Bies.



Jacob Bies

**Northwest
Workers' Justice
Project**

Portland, OR

This summer I was excited to work in a generalized labor law organization. I was looking forward to the chance to branch out into non-agricultural areas of labor law and I was not disappointed. In fact, I was able to work on motions for summary judgment, assist in preparations for and observe depositions, help draft garnishment documents that resulted in successful collection, and much more.

Prior to my fellowship, my experiences and insights into legal practice were quite limited. The experience of talking to clients, and getting clear, concise information about their situation for attorneys to work with (in my second language no less!) showed me how cases come to attorneys at firms like NWJP.

Overall, my experience showed me that I can trust my instincts as a future attorney. **Hearing that my work was thorough and clear and helpful to the attorneys has helped me realize that I have the skills and diligence needed for this work.**

Washington, DC Awards Program

Still Virtual With a Powerful Message



Awardees Fred Redmond, international vice president, Human Affairs for United Steelworkers; Patricia Shea, general counsel, Communications Workers of America and Barry S. Slevin, president, Slevin & Hart, P.C.

“I just want to encourage all of those Peggy Browning fellows to please continue this work. You are not only helping the labor movement with your advocacy, but you are also helping our country become a better country and to fulfill its promise of freedom and justice for all of its citizens,” stressed Fred Redmond.

2020 Summer Fellow Jeff Wang shared his fellowship experience at CWA and noted, “I am very grateful for the financial support that donors and other supporters provide to the Peggy Browning Fellowship. Thank you. **It is really important that students like me and working-class students, students of color, and everyone who’s interested in representing unions and workers are able to have this professional experience while not putting their own financial well-being excessively at risk.**”



Summer Fellow Jeff Wang

On June 16, PBF recognized the careers of 3 leaders in the Washington, DC labor community in a virtual awards program. Fred Redmond, international vice president, Human Affairs for United Steelworkers; Patricia Shea, general counsel, Communications Workers of America and Barry S. Slevin, president, Slevin & Hart, P.C. received the Peggy Browning Award, presented annually to social justice champions who have distinguished themselves with passion and dedication to the rights and needs of workers and their families.

Our awardees had many very powerful messages to share. One from Fred Redmond noted, “The importance that

“I think it’s really important that the unions and union side labor firms support the Peggy Browning Fund and contribute to it because, we’re training the whole next generation of union advocates,” shared Pat Shea.

young lawyers play in this movement is not only necessary but essential in order for us to stand up and fight for workers. Those sharp, smart, articulate labor minds, which I don’t have. That mix of people with grass roots experience and with sharp legal minds is what makes the labor movement effective.”

Pat Shea stressed, “CWA has had 84 Peggy Browning fellows over the years, and that’s an incredible number. They’re amazingly creative, they think out of the box, they have a new mindset, which I think is helpful for the union movement as a whole and it’s inspiring.”

For Barry Slevin, “The Peggy Browning Fund is unique in its goal of trying to foster interest, educate, and direct young lawyers toward supporting and representing working people. **Two of our associates at Slevin & Hart are former Peggy Browning Fellows, so we’ve had great experiences.**”

“The Peggy Browning Fund, by supporting its fellows, really opens their minds and provides diversity for the profession,” stated Barry S. Slevin.

Washington, DC Reception Sponsors

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PBF's First Set of Twins had Similar Summer Fellowships

Continuing to Pursue Careers as Workers' Rights Advocates (cont'd)

of impassioned legal advocacy and strategic community partnerships, they were able to vindicate the rights of workers like her and many others. **Kevin helped recover tens of thousands of dollars in stolen wages and penalties.**

His experience was deeply inspiring and motivational. But he also found parts of it immensely frustrating from the inadequacy of state and federal employment laws, to the horrendous

abuse and exploitation regularly suffered by workers, the unrelenting obstacles that prevent workers from asserting their rights, and the inability of the legal system to meaningfully redress them.

Kevin noted, "Without pressure

exerted by a strong and well-organized labor movement, legal protections for workers will remain inadequate, and workers will remain unable to meaningfully assert the meager rights they do possess."

"Overall, my experiences at TakeRoot greatly reaffirmed my commitment to work as a labor lawyer and support unions and the labor movement,"
shared Kevin Vazquez.

Advocating for Workplace Justice

PBF's Regional Workshops Program is held at law schools across the country and consists of a one-hour panel discussion followed by a networking reception. Panelists include union lawyers, labor law firm attorneys, labor law professors, Peggy Browning Fellowship Alumni and attorneys from the U.S. Department of Labor and the NLRB.

2021 Remaining Workshops Schedule

- | | | | |
|---------|---|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Nov. 2 | University of California, Berkeley School of Law | Nov. 16 | University of Michigan Law School |
| Nov. 4 | New York University School of Law | Nov. 16 | Seton Hall Law School |
| Nov. 8 | University of California, Los Angeles School of Law | Nov. 18 | Harvard Law School |
| Nov. 11 | Chicago-Kent College of Law | | |

For more information go to: <https://www.peggybrowningfund.org/workshops>

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SAVE THE DATES

Join us as the Peggy Browning Award is presented to:



Robert G. Reiter, Jr.
President
Chicago Federation of Labor



Barry M. Bennett
Partner
Dowd, Bloch, Bennett, Cervone, Auerbach & Yokich, LLP



Stephen A. Yokich
Partner
Dowd, Bloch, Bennett, Cervone, Auerbach & Yokich, LLP



Beatrice Lumpkin
Union organizer, Activist, Professor & Writer

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 • 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Sheraton Grand Chicago

301 East North Water Street, Chicago, IL 60611

You must be fully vaccinated to attend or have had a negative COVID test no earlier than Nov. 6th and wear a mask when not eating or drinking.

For more information go to www.peggybrowningfund.org/events or call 267-273-7994.

25th Anniversary Awards Program

Thursday, February 17, 2022
6:00 – 9:00 pm

San Francisco Marriot Marquis



*Recognizing Child Care Providers
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Make Your Mark on our Students' Future!

Did you know that you could help the Peggy Browning Fund educate law students to become workers' rights advocates with an annual gift from your Donor Advised Fund (DAF)?

Many PBF supporters have begun to make their annual gifts from their DAFs, and it's easy to do!

Simply reach out to your fund's contact person and discuss directing your gift to PBF. Then, please let us know to expect it. Your DAF company will notify us when the payment is made.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Rhonda Gelman Kelley, CFRE at rkelly@peggybrowningfund.org. Your gift can make all the difference in the careers of today's law students.