



The Arthur Liman Public Interest Program

Yale Law School

The Arthur Liman Public Interest Program is delighted to announce ten recipients of Liman Fellowships for 2009-2010.

2009-2010 LIMAN PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWS

Alicia Bannon is a 2007 graduate of Yale Law School. Alicia graduated *summa cum laude* from Harvard College in 2001 with an A.B. in Social Studies. Before coming to law school, Alicia worked in Kenya at ICS Africa, an NGO specializing in education and health issues and as a research assistant at the Center for Global Development in Washington D.C. Following graduation from law school, Alicia clerked for the Honorable Kimba M. Wood in the Southern District of New York and is now clerking for the Honorable Sonia Sotomayor in the Second Circuit. For her fellowship year, Alicia will work at the Brennan Center for Justice in New York. Her focus will be on State policies that impose burdensome financial penalties on indigent criminal defendants as a revenue-generating device. Some states now charge indigent defendants for some of the costs associated with their arrest, their prosecution, their public defenders, and their supervision on probation or parole. Alicia will join in reform efforts targeted at New York and Florida.

Josh Berman is a 2007 graduate of Yale Law School and is currently clerking for the Honorable M. Blane Michael on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Josh holds a Master's degree in Environmental Science from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and he graduated *summa cum laude* with a B.A. in mathematics from Yale College. For his Liman fellowship project, Josh will work with the Natural Resources Defense Council in Chicago on litigation to curb greenhouse gas emissions from coal fired power plants. The goals are to ensure that permits for newly proposed coal fired power plants in the Midwest fully comply with the requirements of the Clean Air Act and set limits on the plants' carbon dioxide emissions.

Rebecca Engel is a member of the Yale Law School class of 2009. She graduated *summa cum laude* from Pomona College in 2000. She is also a Ph.D candidate in American Religious History at Princeton University, where she received her M.A. in 2006. Before law school, Rebecca worked as a civil rights researcher, a journalist, and a union organizer. During her fellowship year, Rebecca will work at the Bronx Defenders, where she will provide direct representation to adolescents suffering the civil consequences of being charged as adults in criminal proceedings. These consequences include loss of housing, suspension or expulsion from school, and loss of benefits or employment. Rebecca will also engage in policy advocacy, community education, and targeted litigation to address the school-to-prison pipeline that results from excessive police presence in the New York City public schools.

Jean C. Han is a 2006 graduate of Yale Law School and holds a B.A., *magna cum laude*, from Harvard College. Currently, she is the Albert M. Sacks Clinical Teaching and Advocacy Fellow for the Immigration and Refugee Clinic at Harvard Law School. Jean will spend her Liman Fellowship year working with Ayuda, a legal services provider for foreign-born residents of the Washington, D.C. area. At Ayuda, she will provide comprehensive legal services to immigrant victims of gang violence and human trafficking as they seek the protection of the United States government. In cooperation with immigration attorneys and advocates, she also will seek to develop legal theories that will allow immigrants subjected to persecution by gangs in their native countries to obtain asylum relief under federal law.

Kathy Hunt graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Pennsylvania in 2005 and is a member of the Yale Law School class of 2009. As a Liman fellow, Kathy will work with the New York Civil Liberties Union. Her focus is on children with special needs and how New York City's disciplinary regime limits their access to classrooms. Related work will address the relationship between special needs students and police presence in schools. Before law school, Kathy worked on improving the HIV testing program in New York City's jails as an Urban Fellow in the Department of Health.

Sonia Kumar graduated from Yale Law School in 2008 and is clerking for the Honorable Myron H. Thompson in the District Court for the Middle District of Alabama. Prior to law school, Sonia worked in the legal program at the ACLU of Maryland. She graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of Maryland Honors Program in 2001 and holds a degree in journalism. With her fellowship, Sonia will return to the ACLU of Maryland to work to reduce gender disparities in services available for girls involved in the juvenile justice system. Her goals are to improve conditions of confinement and increase the use of alternatives to incarceration. Sonia will work through litigation, lobbying, press advocacy and public education to encourage the state to provide services that holistically address the needs of girls involved in the juvenile justice system.

Margot Mendelson is a member of the Yale Law School class of 2009. She graduated *magna cum laude* with highest honors from Harvard College in 2003. Before law school, she was a community organizer in northern Guatemala, and then a legal assistant for defense against deportation cases in San Francisco. As a Liman Fellow, Margot will work with the University of Arizona in Tucson and the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. to research and analyze the implications of mandatory electronic employment verification systems ("E-Verify") for immigrants and low-income workers. E-Verify is a federal government database intended to enable employers to verify employees' work eligibility based on immigration status. The program is increasingly implemented on a mandatory basis and has been misused as a tool for racial profiling and limiting collective organizing. Margot will seek to address the impact of the program through field work in Arizona and then present her findings, recommendations, and outreach strategies to advocates and affected communities.

Kirill Penteshin is a member of the Yale Law School Class of 2009. He graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Maryland in 2006. With his Liman Fellowship year, Kirill will work at UNITE HERE Local 11 in Los Angeles, California, where he will assist the union in organizing low-income hotel workers, a workforce largely comprised of immigrant women. His project seeks to improve wages and workplace standards and to help employees achieve voice, representation, and bargaining rights at Los Angeles hotels.

Benjamin Plener is a member of the Yale Law School class of 2009. He graduated with High Distinction from the University of Toronto in 2004 and then studied International Development as a Commonwealth Scholar at the London School of Economics. As a Liman Fellow, Benjamin will work with the Special Litigation Department at the Orleans Public Defenders and join a group of public defenders and stakeholders seeking to reform New Orleans' system for the pretrial detention of indigent criminal defendants. Currently, poor individuals are often subjected to prolonged pretrial detention on a weak evidentiary basis because they cannot afford the cash bonds set by local magistrates.

Vasudha Talla graduated *magna cum laude* from New York University in 2004 and will graduate from Yale Law School in 2009. As a Liman Fellow, she will work with Sanctuary for Families in New York to assist detained immigrant women to obtain forms of legal relief under federal provisions specifically intended for victims of gender-based violence. Vasudha will represent detained immigrants in their removal proceedings, create materials for use by pro se immigrants and other lawyers, and provide technical assistance to other attorneys.