KIRKLAND & ELLIS ENDOWS $1 MILLION PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWSHIP AT COLUMBIA AND NYU LAW SCHOOLS

The law firm of Kirkland & Ellis has endowed a $1 million joint public service fellowship for Columbia Law School and NYU School of Law. The awards will be known as the “Kirkland & Ellis New York City Public Service Fellowships” and will provide one-year grants of approximately $30,000 each year to a graduate of Columbia and a graduate of NYU to practice law in support of the public good in New York City.

Dean Lance Leibman said, “Columbia is delighted to join with Kirkland & Ellis and NYU to permit outstanding students, who have achieved a great deal for the public interest while in law school, to continue their commitment after graduation. Kirkland & Ellis has made an eloquent statement about its dedication to public service in the New York community.”

“We opened our New York office five years ago with 12 attorneys and today we are approaching 60,” said William H. Pratt ’77, a litigation partner in the New York office. “We’ve been very successful here, and we wanted to give something special back to New York that would signal our commitment to the community.” Mr. Pratt noted that the announcement of the fellowship was timed to coincide with the firm’s fifth anniversary celebration in New York in February.

The Kirkland & Ellis Public Service Fellowship will be the first significant joint endeavor between the two law schools. Kirk A. Radke, a corporate partner at Kirkland & Ellis, said, “We selected NYU and Columbia as joint recipients for the fellowships because of their preeminent reputation — not only here in the city, but nationally. We are excited about this unique opportunity to work collaboratively with the top students at these two schools to make a meaningful contribution to the city.”

The first fellowships will be given out in 1996. Fellowships will be chosen by selection committees at each of the schools. Applications will be accepted in November 1995 and the decisions announced in February 1996. Proposals must be for public service law work within the five boroughs of New York City.

“The Kirkland & Ellis Fellowship is a creative way to combine the resources of a private law firm, the talent of top law graduates, and the expertise of public interest law organizations to provide access to justice for New Yorkers who might otherwise go unrepresented,” said Ellen Chapnick, assistant dean for the public interest program. “I hope that the fellowship will serve as a catalyst for others to forge new partnerships between the private bar, law schools, and public interest groups that will put young lawyers to work meeting serious human needs.”

The fellowship is being funded by the Kirkland & Ellis Foundation and by individual partner contributions, according to Glen E. Hess, the senior corporate partner in Kirkland’s New York office.

“The uniqueness of this program has generated a great deal of support among the partners in the New York office and our partners firmwide who have ties to the two schools,” he said. “We feel privileged to be working with Columbia and NYU in this public service initiative that will contribute to the New York community for many years to come.”
Prisoners and Families Clinic Helps Woman Gain Clemency

On Christmas Eve 2002, Gov. George Pataki ’70 granted executive clemency to Linda White, whose petition was prepared by Columbia students. Ms. White had served 13 years in prison for the murder of her abusive boyfriend.

During the 1997-98 school year, students in the Law School’s Prisoners and Families Clinic – Elizabeth Chen ’00, Shelley Case Inglis ’99, Tracey Gainor ’99, and Carla Berg (M.S.W., School of Social Work, ’98), along with Clinic Director and Professor Philip Gentry – drafted a 70-page petition that highlighted Ms. White’s many years of psychological and physical abuse and her unblemished prison record. They also compiled extensive documentary evidence – including letters from people who observed Ms. White’s abuse and a psychologist’s report – in support of the application for clemency.

“It took four years to achieve success,” said Prof. Gentry. Ms. White was represented by Sara Bennett of the Legal Aid Society, who worked closely with Columbia adjunct faculty member Dorchen Leidholdt.

Prof. Garro’s Testimony Opens the Way for Latin American Fruit Workers to Gain Justice

For the past eight years, Professor Alejandro M. Garro ’90 J.S.D. has been fighting to give injured banana workers their day in an American court. His work began in 1995, when a Dallas firm asked if he was interested in providing expert testimony for a case involving the laws of six Central and South American countries and the illegal use of DiBromochloropropene (DBCP).

DBCP is a pesticide developed in the 1940s for use on banana farms. Tests have shown that it causes sterility, increased risk of cancer, and genetic defects unless used with protective clothing. It was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1979 and classified as a carcinogenic agent by the FDA. More than 3,000 Central American workers say they were exposed to the chemical without being told of its dangers and without being supplied protective clothing as late as 1985.

By 1995 thousands of victims – many of whom had cancer or had become sterile – banded together to sue both the producers and the users of DBCP, among them Shell Oil Company, Dow Chemical, and Dole Food. The companies resisted. According to Prof. Garro, they set up a motion to dismiss the case on grounds of the doctrine of forum non conveniens, which is well known in common law countries but unheard of in most of the civil law world. Although the U.S. courts had jurisdiction to deal with these cases, the defendants alleged that a U.S. forum where the companies have their central administration is ‘inconvenient’ and that these cases should be litigated in foreign countries where the pesticide was applied.

The problem, said Prof. Garro, is that the judicial machinery in most of the countries in question – among them, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala – are inadequate to the task of handling such cases.

“The highest courts in some of those Latin American countries have already held that their courts were not available to entertain disputes that the plaintiffs had legally chosen to bring in the United States where defendants have their main place of business,” he said.

In his role, Prof. Garro has provided expert testimony before federal district courts in Hawaii, Mississippi, and Louisiana, showing the inadequacy of Central American legal systems to cope with this type of litigation and the potential misuse of the doctrine of forum non conveniens in this case.

His work has paid off. A recent ruling by a New Orleans federal judge has opened the way for a U.S. court hearing on whether the workers’ cases could be tried under what Prof. Garro calls the “antiquated 19th century judicial structures” of Central America, or in U.S. courts. Until the cases are settled, Prof. Garro said he intends to continue fighting for the rights of thousands of Central American workers.
Prisoners and Families Clinic Helps Woman Gain Clemency

On Christmas Eve 2002, Gov. George Pataki '70 granted executive clemency to Linda White, whose petition was prepared by Columbia students. Ms. White had served 13 years in prison for the murder of her abusive boyfriend.

During the 1997-98 school year, students in the Law School's Prisoners and Families Clinic – Elizabeth Chen '00, Shelley Case Inglis '99, Tracey Gainor '99, and Carla Berg (M.S.W., School of Social Work, '98), along with Clinic Director and Professor Philip Genty – drafted a 70-page petition that highlighted Ms. White's many years of psychological and physical abuse and her unblemished prison record. They also compiled extensive documentary evidence – including letters from people who observed Ms. White's abuse and a psychologist's report – in support of the application for clemency.

"It took four years to achieve success," said Prof. Genty. Ms. White was represented by Sara Bennett of the Legal Aid Society, who worked closely with Columbia adjunct faculty member Dorchen Leidholdt.

Prof. Garro's Testimony Opens the Way for Latin American Fruit Workers to Gain Justice

For the past eight years, Professor Alejandro M. Garro '90 J.S.D. has been fighting to give injured banana workers their day in an American court. His work began in 1995, when a Dallas firm asked if he was interested in providing expert testimony for a case involving the laws of six Central and South American countries and the illegal use of Dibromochloropropane (DBCP).

DBCP is a pesticide developed in the 1940s for use on banana farms. Tests have shown that it causes sterility, increased risk of cancer, and genetic defects unless used with protective clothing. It was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1979 and classified as a carcinogenic agent by the FDA. More than 3,000 Central American workers say they were exposed to the chemical without being told of its dangers and without being supplied protective clothing as late as 1985.

By 1995 thousands of victims – many of whom had cancer or had become sterile – banded together to sue both the producers and the users of DBCP, among them Shell Oil Company, Dow Chemical, and Dole Food. The companies resisted. According to Prof. Garro, they set up a motion to dismiss the case on grounds of the doctrine of forum non conveniens, which is well known in common law countries but unheard of in most of the civil law world. Although the U.S. courts had jurisdiction to deal with these cases, the defendants alleged that a U.S. forum where the companies have their central administration is "inconvenient" and that these cases should be litigated in foreign countries where the pesticide was applied.

The problem, said Prof. Garro, is that the judicial machinery in most of the countries in question – among them, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala – are inadequate to the task of handling such cases.

"The highest courts in some of those Latin American countries have already held that their courts were not available to entertain disputes that the plaintiffs had legally chosen to bring in the United States where defendants have their main place of business," he said.

In his role, Prof. Garro has provided expert testimony before federal district courts in Hawaii, Mississippi, and Louisiana, showing the inadequacy of Central American legal systems to cope with this type of litigation and the potential misuse of the doctrine of forum non conveniens in this case.

His work has paid off. A recent ruling by a New Orleans federal judge has opened the way for a U.S. court hearing on whether the workers' cases could be tried under what Prof. Garro calls the "antiquated 19th century judicial structures" of Central America, or in U.S. courts. Until the cases are settled, Prof. Garro said he intends to continue fighting for the rights of thousands of Central American workers.
Prisoners and Families Clinic Helps Woman Gain Clemency

On Christmas Eve 2002, Gov. George Pataki '70 granted executive clemency to Linda White, whose petition was prepared by Columbia students. Ms. White had served 13 years in prison for the murder of her abusive boyfriend.

During the 1997-98 school year, students in the Law School's Prisoners and Families Clinic — Elizabeth Chen '00, Shelley Case Inglis '99, Tracey Gainor '99, and Carla Berg (M.S.W., School of Social Work, '98), along with Clinic Director and Professor Philip Genty — drafted a 70-page petition that highlighted Ms. White's many years of psychological and physical abuse and her unblemished prison record. They also compiled extensive documentary evidence — including letters from people who observed Ms. White's abuse and a psychologist's report — in support of the application for clemency.

"It took four years to achieve success," said Prof. Genty. Ms. White was represented by Sara Bennett of the Legal Aid Society, who worked closely with Columbia adjunct faculty member Dorchen Leidholdt.

Prof. Garro's Testimony Opens the Way for Latin American Fruit Workers to Gain Justice

For the past eight years, Professor Alejandro M. Garro '90 J.S.D. has been fighting to give injured banana workers their day in an American court. His work began in 1995, when a Dallas firm asked if he was interested in providing expert testimony for a case involving the laws of six Central and South American countries and the illegal use of Dibromochloropropane (DBCP).

DBCP is a pesticide developed in the 1940s for use on banana farms. Tests have shown that it causes sterility, increased risk of cancer, and genetic defects unless used with protective clothing. It was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1979 and classified as a carcinogenic agent by the FDA. More than 3,000 Central American workers say they were exposed to the chemical without being told of its dangers and without being supplied protective clothing as late as 1985.

By 1999, thousands of victims — many of whom had cancer or had become sterile — banded together to sue both the producers and the users of DBCP, among them Shell Oil Company, Dow Chemical, and Dole Food. The companies resisted. According to Prof. Garro, they set up a motion to dismiss the case on grounds of the doctrine of forum non conveniens, which is well known in common law countries but unheard of in most of the civil law world. Although the U.S. courts had jurisdiction to deal with these cases, the defendants alleged that a U.S. forum where the companies have their central administration is "inconvenient" and that these cases should be litigated in foreign countries where the pesticide was applied.

The problem, said Prof. Garro, is that the judicial machinery in most of these countries is in question — among them, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala — are inadequate to the task of handling such cases.

"The highest courts in some of those Latin American countries have already held that their courts were not available to entertain disputes that the plaintiffs had legally chosen to bring in the United States where defendants have their main place of business," he said.

In his role, Prof. Garro has provided expert testimony before federal district courts in Hawaii, Mississippi, and Louisiana, showing the inadequacy of Central American legal systems to cope with this type of litigation and the potential misuse of the doctrine of forum non conveniens in this case.

His work has paid off. A recent ruling by a New Orleans federal judge has opened the way for a U.S. court hearing on whether the workers' cases could be tried under what Prof. Garro calls the "antiquated 19th century judicial structures" of Central America, or in U.S. courts. Until the cases are settled, Prof. Garro said he intends to continue fighting for the rights of thousands of Central American workers.