

Dean Aviva Abramovsky:

Our Roundtable event is *Cultivating Civil Legal Justice Leaders to Address the Structural Challenges of Poverty, Injustice and Inequality*. The bios of the distinguished panelists can be viewed on the conference website. Our moderator is Steven Banks, Special Counsel for Pro Bono at Paul, Weiss, Rifkin, Wharton & Garrison LLP. Our participants include Saima Akhtar, Senior Attorney at the National Center for Law and Economic Justice; Professor Kim Diana Connolly, Vice Dean for Advocacy and Experiential Education at the University of Buffalo School of Law; Judge Craig Hannah, New York State Supreme Court Justice in the 8th Judicial District and a 1995 graduate of UB Law and good friend; Adrian Neil, General Counsel of the Rochester City School District, who is a member of the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice; Shivani Parikh, a second year law student at Fordham University who is a Stein Scholar, REAL Scholar and Crowley Scholar. And, of course, Professor William Quigley, retired Clinical Professor of Law at University of New Orleans College of Law.

Thank you so much for participating; I am very pleased to turn it over to Steve. I hope we grow together and we've got work to do. Thank you again from UB Law.

Steven Banks:

Thank you very much, Dean, for that introduction. We're blessed and grateful for the context that Bill Quigley will be giving us with a Call to Action at the end of this session. I wanted to just highlight at the beginning, his law journal piece that tells the story of students helping in the aftermath of Katrina. And one of them remarking to Bill, "The first thing I lost in law school was the reason that I came. This will help me get back on track." Although we're not doing introductions for the members of this panel, I can say that you'll see, looking at their bios and hearing what they have to say, that each person is certainly someone who's on track to have an impact through their work. Before we start with our roundtable conversation, I wanted to make one comment, which is that there are many ways that people can have an impact.

When I was head of the Legal Aid Society in New York City, I used to recruit each of the first-year classes in the metropolitan area in the city and speak to the classes. And I'd always say, we'd like to hire everyone in this room, but we can't afford it. But even if we could hire all of you, we would still want people to go into government to reform the laws that benefit our clients. And we also need people to go to private law firms to do pro bono work and make donations. So with that note, let's open it up to questions and we're going to do it in a round-robin fashion. First question that we're going to tackle is what motivates you to do social justice work, civil justice work? And I know because now that I'm back practicing law after a stint in government, we should always call on a Judge first.

Judge Craig Hannah:

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for having me here. And again, I'm Craig Hannah and it's my honor and privilege to serve you as a New York State Supreme Court Judge. That is an amazing question and I'm going to start with this. The reason why I'm charged with helping other people is that, as I stated in the past and always state, is that I wouldn't be sitting here today if it wasn't for good people helping me. They say as iron sharpens iron, so too, men

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sharpen men and women. And if you surround yourself around good people, you can glean good knowledge, and wisdom, and understanding from them. And there's no way you can ever pay them back for the sacrifices that they made on behalf of you and your career, and they wouldn't want you to pay them back. But one thing we can all do is pay it forward by helping all individuals that come in front of us.

And again, I always like to say this too is, I think our job is people that we call the talent attempt, is to connect people with hopes and dreams, with the people with ways and means. And I think we can do that. We can make sure that they can get the services that they need, whether it's educational, whether it's vocational, whether it's mental health, maybe it's substance use. We can make sure that when we touch them, that they'll leave much better than we first saw them. And I think we're all committed to that charge. I'm going to be quiet because I can talk for hours without taking breath. But I would say this, I think everyone, especially an individual myself who went to UB Law School, I'm not the same person I was when I first came in. The school changed me tremendously. It really let me know that you might start off selfish, but when you leave you realize that service comes before yourself. And when you put service first, you make the world a better place. Thank you.

Steven Banks:

Thank you, Judge. Shivani, you're in school. What motivates you to do social justice work?

Shivani Parikh:

Yes, I am currently a second-year law student at Fordham. And what motivates me is seeing the work that needs to be done to advance the civil rights and racial justice of my community. My parents are Indian immigrants. But when I say community, it means South Asians as a whole. It's been really enriching to see the macro scale and multi-scale or level work of groups like the NAACP, LDF, the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, Asian American Legal Defense Fund. What's also become very apparent, especially in these 20 to 25 years since 9/11 that the South Asian community has a lot of distinctive needs and legal challenges. That we have reached a point that while we've been generous enough to be included in the Pan-Asian movement, it's time for us to work alongside everyone and in our distinctive way. And so that and living in New York City, where the needs are very prevalent and tangible, which makes it sometimes emotionally challenging, but also intellectually a really great place to be.

Steven Banks:

Great, thank you, Shivani. Adrian, what's your motivation?

Adrian Neil:

Good afternoon, Adrian Neil, General Counsel of the Rochester City School District. I'm happy to be here with the other distinguished panelists today. I will say, like Judge Hannah, when I think about why I do the type of work I do, I think about the sacrifices that had to be made to get me to where I am. And I always think of the saying with great power comes great responsibility. I do see myself and attorneys, no matter your background, and I didn't come from a privileged

background, that we are now in a position of privilege. And so, we have a duty and obligation to reach back and help those who need it the most.

Legal work is tough no matter what field you're in. And when I'm tired at the end of the day from a long hard day, I always feel like I can look myself in the mirror and say that, you know what, I think I helped some folks today. I think I made the world a little bit better if I did my job right, if I gave it my all. So that's what makes me do the work that I do.

Steven Banks:

That's great. Kim, what's motivating you?

Professor Kim Diana Connolly:

So as a first gen student, when I graduated from college, I became a Vista volunteer. Shortly thereafter realized that I needed some more letters after my name, JD, to enable me to make some of the change that I wanted to. And then I worked for a while and I got the best job ever-- access to justice work with student attorneys admitted to practice. So what continues to motivate me are the student attorneys I work with. And so, I'm actually going to lift up their voices. I could be reading to you for an hour, my students do reflective exercises about access to justice. I'm just going to read you a couple of quotes so you can get a sense of the people who choose to be students at UB, that's how UB Law responds as SUNY's law school.

So here are a couple of quotes from my students. "A lesson I learned was just because the solution makes sense doesn't mean it's right. Society's not a mathematical equation. You can't solve for every variable. Often, I try to find the most efficient way forward. But in clinic you learn that efficiency leads to alienation and disproportionately targets LGBTQIA plus women in BIPOC." That's from one student.

Another student said, "Without access to justice, freedom cannot persist. Equal access to justice doesn't occur by chance. It requires sacrifice, compassion, understanding and vigilance. Access to justice work is part of what makes me feel human."

And another student wrote that, "The justice that plaintiffs want in this case is pretty simple. It is less providing justice access than injustice reduction."

And I have my students also do poetry, so I'm just going to read you just a couple of snippets of poetry and then I will turn it over. But I just want to lift up their voices. This is from one student. "Goal, give everyone access equal access to justice. Reality, more often only the privileged have access to justice. New goal, change the system. How? I need to learn."

Another student wrote, "They say you can get justice, but where, and how, and when? They say you can get justice only if the doors are open."

And then the last piece of reflection from my student voices that I get to work with and now you guess get why I love this job, "Access is disparate. There are no lawyers in my family. Wealth or power, not based on merit. Rather what you inherit. How much money your family has, your gender and your race, or if there are lawyers in your family." Access to justice work I do because I get to work with these amazing students.

Steven Banks:

That's great. Very, very powerful. Saima.

Saima Akhtar:

Hello, I'm Saima, a senior attorney at the National Center for Law and Economic Justice. I've been practicing in legal services for almost 15 years now. I came to legal services work and came to law school. I didn't grow up wanting to be a lawyer. I came into it because I actually was a social worker for a number of years. I did emergency domestic violence, crisis work and shelter work in Madison, Wisconsin for about five years. And it's really hard work and it's really good work. And anybody who works with survivors understand also that it's a very high emotional load work. A huge amount of what we did though in emergency shelter services was basic needs work. Literally getting people food, and shelter, and clothing over and over again. And the system was not equipped. We were fighting the same battle a thousand times over every year for every single client.

And I had a very astute executive director who said, "Go be a lawyer. Go fix the system." She was a lawyer by training and had a winding career along the way. And had done several different things in legal services in government and was now running a nonprofit. She said, "This is a really good toolbox for fixing problems." And so I did. I came to law school. And it was always going to be for me about basic needs work, and law reform work, and trying to make things work better. It's the same set of clients I had when I was working as a social worker. And it's the same set of problems I do work on now, welfare, and food stamps, and shelter to some extent. But I feel like I have a more robust set of tools for coming into the work and getting the job done.

Steven Banks:

That's great. Bill. Other than stealing your thunder with a great line from your article-- I know you're going to speak later, but I don't want to deprive you of an opportunity to jump in and answer the question.

Bill Quigley:

So honestly, I came to be a lawyer a different way. I originally studied to be a priest and decided that was not for me before I became a priest. And then I was a social worker like Saima. And I ran into a lot of lawyers as a social worker. And honestly, I was underwhelmed by a lot of the lawyers. I didn't think they were all that sparkling. And I thought, well, that's something I could do. I'd like to help people. And so that really brought me to law school. That and a bunch of mothers and grandmothers in a public housing development where I was working as a social worker, they really encouraged me. So that's how I got started.

Steven Banks:

Great. Now you're also challenging us to be sparkling.

Bill Quigley:

That's true.

Steven Banks:

Shivani, As someone who's in law school now and committed to public interest in social justice, what has been your law school experience so far? I know Dean Diller won't take any offense to anything. But what's the good, the bad, and the ugly?

Shivani Parikh:

Yes. I think the privilege that I've had really has been being in various programs at Fordham. So the Stein Scholars Program for Public Interest and Ethics. And meeting like-minded peers who also see themselves in this work long term and beyond. Of course, the necessary and important contributions by folks working at firms with pro bono work. But what does it mean to want to see a systemic change and that being a part of your, not only your motivation, but the opportunities that you choose. With the REAL Scholars program, being a part of a cohort of diverse peers regardless of their career trajectory, but to know that when many of your professors, or role models, or histories, or even the ways that we sometimes discuss case law don't reflect our limited experiences, though they may be embedded within them to know that I'm not alone.

And then the Crowley International Human Rights Program within our Leitner Center. I had the opportunity to study abroad as an undergrad in Brazil, South Africa, and India. And those opportunities, particularly in South Africa, and learning from the Indian resistance to apartheid have always been a huge part of my interest in global human rights injustice. And so though I don't know precisely how that'll be integrated into my more domestic civil rights goals, it's always something that I find instructive.

I would say with the bad and the ugly, it has less to do with law school, but more to do with the nature of being a full-time law student and being in an instructional environment that sometimes takes you away from the real challenges that are in our city. For me, I currently am a helpline volunteer, for example, with Sakhi for South Asian women, which provides direct services to victims and survivors of South Asian background. And it's something that keeps me grounded but also reminds me of how, as the other speakers alluded to, when people are challenged in one way, it's usually several failures at a time. It's not just a matter of these women being in household situations where they're being abused in a myriad of ways, but it has more also to do with the fact that we don't have shelter capacity for everyone who needs it. Often, shelters are not culturally responsive or sensitive. What happens when you have other factors like your children, your in-laws, and social services which don't always reflect the needs of people with different language barriers and religious restrictions and needs. And that goes beyond also the fact that legal capacity is very low. There's high turnover in family law. And frankly, public interest law and from a diversity perspective, is not so different from the legal profession as a whole. So what does it mean to be a law student and to know that you want to go into public interest work, but you're often disincentivized to find opportunities outside of the law school to really be a part of the place you live.

I think the last thing I would briefly touch on is that there's always a cost benefits analysis. We know, and this was alluded to in the recorded remarks by the Chief Judge previously, that we're just simply not going to get compensated as well for the work that we're going to do. And I feel privileged to be able to say that I'm being supported by my family to be able to do this work. But the result of that is we don't often have people with lived experiences who are becoming attorneys for the people who are going through what they've been through, if that makes sense. And so, constantly trying to figure out how can we as attorneys who don't have those lived experiences, but want to come as close to being aligned advocates as possible, intentional advocates, client-centered as possible, trauma informed, what does it mean for us to do that when sometimes having the opportunity to participate in clinic or volunteer is not quite enough?

Steven Banks:

Very helpful. Thank you. Judge, back to you. Are there things that you think from your own experience and then from lawyers that appear before you, are there things you think law schools can and should do to cultivate law students to pursue civil legal justice, social justice careers?

Judge Craig Hannah:

Thank you. I think the law school is doing an excellent job with the individuals that they turned out now. And I don't want to badmouth my generation, but I think my generation, when I left law school, we all wanted to be millionaires. We weren't thinking about the intrinsic value of like Ms. Parikh stated and Mr. Neil stated, I get so much reward when I encounter someone at the grocery store who I helped, and you help hundreds of people or thousands of people over the course of your life, that you don't even know that you helped them. And they give you all the credit for help change in their life. There's so much intrinsic value, such a major deposit in your emotional bank account, even when you go out with your colleagues, how do you know all these people? But these are people that you took the time to treat them as individuals and to make sure that you helped that they had a better existence.

And when you do that, the reward is paid forward tremendously because they're helping everyone. I think the law school does an excellent job with us training our young attorneys. The issue that I find, and I believe I'm going to use Generation X, I don't want to pick on another one, is that generation Z, I think, is more in tune with microaggressions, more in tune with biases, whether they're implicit or implicit, or explicit or implicit. They're more in tune with things that we tend to overlook. And I think one thing that I do, and I know we're all social workers as Professor Quigley stated, because once you touch an individual, you want to make sure they get connected to resources. But one thing I do is have to educate my colleagues. And my colleagues will slip up.

And I know Professor Connolly will see this and say, do you really believe all that stuff that you talk about? About how if you connect people with resources, you can see that their life will change tremendously and you will get off of this tough on crime nonsense. Because when you place people back in the payroll or on the tax rolls and they're successful, that's the main incentive. And when people give me that little sliver or let me get on my soapbox, they're going

to hate that they did it because I think it's our job to educate them. Because we all want to make sure that individuals look at their social biases and we have them. And I don't care how astute or how trained you are, we all have implicit biases. And once you understand that your brain takes shortcuts, and even though we're smart, those shortcuts can really affect the way you treat people. So I think that's the hardest thing we have to do in our profession, is to educate our colleagues to curtail or to train themselves that they don't let their implicit biases affect their judgments.

Steven Banks:

Great. Now Kim, you're in a role of leadership in a law school. But as you look at law schools in general, and, yours in particular, are there things that you think that can be done to cultivate people to want to pursue the kind of career that Shivani is pursuing?

Professor Kim Diana Connolly:

There are lots of ways to do it. And many of my friends who teach at law schools, both in New York and other spaces, including around the world, are doing it. Of course, I have some particular bias to experiential learning, particularly clinics and our wonderful externships programs. But there's other ways. We have some fabulous experiential courses that provide through simulations, experiences that people can get in deep. And now I'm going to go just a little bit truly law professor and wonky here. As a law school we get accredited, and so therefore, there are some rules we have to follow. And there are some interesting new rules that the American Bar Association, our accrediting body has put out that we've been doing for years. I think we can lean in and do even more to cultivate through these rules.

There's a new very explicit statement of something we've been doing in clinics and other spaces for years, which is professional identity formation. Helping students really explore how they themselves are going to become lawyers, and offering opportunities in deep ways to think about access to justice as they are on that pathway to professional identity formation. There's also a new rule, and I'm going to actually just read the actual rule language of 303-C, that requires that a law school shall provide education to law students on bias, cross-cultural competency, and racism. All of those things are embedded in access to justice limitations for many people. So providing those exposures in not just clinics but in other spaces throughout the law school, is really going to help transform and get to that space.

I also think giving people opportunity to experience-- that a number of you reacted to from one of my students -- which is not going to magically provide all the access to justice. But what we can do, is teach students ways, and expose them to ways, and have them thinking about ways, to do injustice reduction in their work going forward.

Steven Banks:

Very helpful. Adrian, you see all kinds of lawyers in your world and you've had your career as well. Anything, looking at your interactions with lawyers now or your own experience, that you think law schools could do to encourage more students like Shivani? Sorry, Shivani, I keep referencing you, but I can't help it.

Adrian Neil:

Right. Absolutely. And I would echo a lot of what have already been said by my colleagues here. I'll be blunt with it with the first thing I'm going to raise, it's expense. Law school, just like education in general, higher education is just too expensive. And I understand, you have excellent professors, and facilities, and things like that that have to be paid for. But as a community, society, a country, we have to figure out ways to make law school less expensive. Or there needs to be more pathways, to loan forgiveness, to scholarships, to things that would make the attorneys that want to do this work able to do this work. So that's the first one and that's going to need, again, a lot of brain power, and just a lot of commitment from not just lawyers ourselves, but again the entire community from our politicians, from everyone being invested so you have more attorneys who are going to be able to ultimately serve the community, and just make everything better for everyone.

I heard experiential learning reference and I think that is an excellent point as well. I think law school can be, based on my own experience and just kind of general feedback. It can be a kind of cutthroat environment where you run through a mill to get you to big job at a big firm somewhere so you can pay off the expensive loans. One of the things that set me on the path to where I am was experiential opportunity. I had one idea going into law school, but through the experience of all these internships, and public service, and public interest that really I think, led me to where I am today. And if not for those experiences, I could have ended up doing something completely different. I hope I would still be helping and giving back to the community, feeling the same satisfaction.

I think I have been placed in a position to do a lot more for community through some of those experiences. And the other thing is preparing folks for mental toll that the work can take on you. I've said it often, public interest work, you have to be prepared to get your heart broken. You're serving some of the most underserved, underprivileged folks who need it the most. And we do it because we care. But it can take a toll. So you need support systems, you need family, you need groups, you need organizations who're going to support you through that work and understand what it takes to get that work done. So I think those are a couple of things that law schools can do. And add one more thing. I think you can help students if you want to get more students into the field where we are now, target them earlier. You might want to target students before they even get to law school.

We have programs here in Rochester. And one of them was spearheaded by our administrative judge at the time, Judge Doran, it's called the Just Law Program, where the judges go into the schools along with attorneys. Some of these students have never seen a lawyer or judge in person before. And we go into schools and we expose them, we let them see that we're real people, we let them see that the careers are attainable. And you start building that public interest mindset into students before they get to law school because sometimes the mind's already made up about what fields or what careers they want to enter into before they get to law school. So I think we can get more out of the students and from a public interest mindset if we start building that in even before law school.

Steven Banks:

That's great. Saima, what's your thought about things law schools can do?

Saima Akhtar:

I mean, I think there've been an exceptional number of really good ideas touched on here. I will say just in reference to Kim Diana's point, the externships and experiences, actual experiences and legal services that I had as a law student were for me, a really huge deal in sort of surviving the law school experience that was inhospitable to me, both socially and progressively in terms of my views and values. I think from my perspective, and this is a hard thing to talk about, and I think it's something that really has to be talked about, is I think there has to be an acknowledgement in what the legal system is and has been. And talk about that in a meaningful way moving forward and looking at what change really means within our system. It's not just within our profession but it's within our system. Laws and rules are a system. This is our system of governments. It's the structure of our country and our organizations.

And these are organizations and structures that were set up to preserve property rights and wealth to entrench, establish modalities of power. There is a huge amount there to unpack. And I think for me, what I realized when I was in law school as a Gen Xer like Judge Hannah, a number of years back was that it was extremely demoralizing. It was very hard for me to sit and have the fundamental basis of the education to be this valuation of property. And this extremely aged notion of property rights and things like that. Which is not to say I didn't like my property professor, I loved my property professor. But I think that we need to talk about the fact that the system was set up and established in a way that was intended to keep power exactly where it is.

And so as we are walking into law schools and the legal profession with the mindset of systems change and reform, there has to be a fundamental conversation and an eye to the notion that we are coming in to disrupt the status quo, but also functioning within a system and continuing to do the work. There is this deep tension there, which can be stressful for people, and can cause cognitive dissonance, and can also put you at odds with people who are your peers. It's an incredibly important and valuable thing. But we need to talk about it. And we need to use our really sharp analytical tools to come into this, and do the analysis, and have the dialogue because it's the core. From my standpoint as someone who does systems change and law reform work and litigation, it is the core and the necessity of the work itself.

And that should be starting, it needs to be starting with our students from the beginning is coming in and saying, this is how we've done it, but also these are the flaws and the difficulties in acknowledging the places where race and gender bias, bias against LGBBTQ individuals where there has been anti-Semitic. There are so many systemic oppressions that have played out in different ways, and talking about that, and moving through that. And I just feel like that's a huge piece of it. And I will just tag on to one of my favorite topics and just say that I think that starting to acknowledge that and work through that will be a piece of being able to address the burnout and secondary trauma that we see in legal services work and in the work by attorneys who are in the field, serving disenfranchised, and very often very traumatized individuals without resources, because that is such a heavy burden on the practitioners in addition to the clients.

Steven Banks:

Very well said. And you got a lot of red hearts, and thumbs, and applause coming up. Isn't it great to have online immediate response? Bill, anything you want to add to that great round-robin of comments capped by very powerful words from Saima.

Professor Bill Quigley:

I applaud Saima for what she said. The insights there, in terms of law school, the legal profession, the system, the way it's all set up are totally on point. Law does not equal justice. And we've figured that out pretty quickly. But it is our challenge to try to narrow that gap. And you can't narrow the gap unless you recognize what the gap is and what the structures that uphold that gap. And that's been the way for a long time. And its opportunities to hear from people like this panel and other ones that are going today for people to be able to stake their claim to disrupting the status quo, to changing and transforming this system, this legal system, the criminal legal system, the civil legal system, try to make them approximate a justice system. So I know that's why a lot of people are here. And I would just encourage folks, we need you so badly. And you can tell with the power of just a couple of people in the presentations here today.

Steven Banks:

Thank you. Now, a two-parter. Were there law school experiences or a course that influenced your choice and path to the kind of work that you're doing or want to do? And was there something that you wish you were taught in law school that you weren't? Judge, you first.

Judge Craig Hannah:

I can answer the second part more easily. What I wish I was taught in law school was to be kinder to my classmates. I think some of us hinted at that before. Because when you got there it was uber competitive. I think Adrian said it earlier, you're trying to compete to get a good job so you can pay off your undergrad and your graduate school loans. And you were so focused on that. wish I was taught to be a better person or better human citizen, a world citizen. I think the class that had the most impact on me was a seminar. It was a law and sexuality class that would open my mind. Because I think a lot of us are a little conservative when you first enter that door. But the beauty of seminars and study abroad, I know Saima talked about it, and being exposed to people from other cultures, it opens your mind. And you need that.

I think the reason diversity, equity, inclusion is so important is that it's hard to be a racist when your best friend is someone that doesn't look like you. But when you are in a homogenized society, and you have everyone that looks like you and think you, you have no one there to call you out. And I think that's the beauty of being in a open, and diverse, and protective environment where no one's opinion is suppressed, is that people just as smart or smarter than you are going to call you out, and call you on your BS, and call you on your microaggressions, and call you on everything that you thought was right. And you have nothing to back it up on, but it's just some social experience but nothing empirical.

So the beauty of the law school is that, being around other people who you can share and open your expressed ideas. I'm going to stop there because again, I like to ramble on and I want to hear from the panel. And this is an amazing panel. And if I didn't say this before and I know you said it, I'm really learning and this is just so much enrichment being on this panel.

Steven Banks:

Well, very powerful comments. Shivani, there is still time. Any particular course or experience in terms of helping you sort of think through what you want to do? Or alternatively in your remaining time is there something you wish that you could be taught, or learn, or experience?

Shivani Parikh:

Yes. I'm going to note an experience as well as two classes that I am currently in. An experience that has continued to shape what I prioritize has been visiting taxi drivers who are members of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, the Union for Yellow Cab drivers, but really all drivers who are regulated by the Taxi and Limousine Commission, who went on a hunger strike in front of City Council in October of my first year of law school. And it's very important for me because for those who don't know, the NYTWA was founded by three South Asians. And the taxi industry is 40% South Asian industry, but moreover a 94% immigrant force. The medallion crisis is a direct consequence of the mismanagement and apathy of the struggles that immigrants face who are deliberately exploited and especially many of whom are visa precarious. So frankly, the accountability is sort of wishy-washy in this regard. It's really only been taken as a city enabled infiltration of Uber and Lyft.

The thing that struck me was to see people who, not only who looked like me but who had been militant in a way that I had not really seen where I had grown up, but had also shown me the power of what it could mean for lawyers to be led by the decisions of working people. What does it mean to prioritize solidarity as your mechanism for being an attorney, as opposed to only being a stop gap for keeping them in the movement. And that really leads me to my second comment, which is I'm currently in a class called Movement Lawyering with Professor Brian Glick. I'm also in a class called Access to Justice, which is led by three professors, professors Lauren Jones, David Udell, and Bruce Green. And what's really complicated is that I think that there are two theories of change, which are parallel but distinct.

I think movement lawyering really emphasizes what does it mean? A lot of the things that I previously described of feeling a sense of proximity and a sense of bond with the so-called clients or people that you're advocating for. Whereas access to justice has always been a much more policy-based avenue of what does it mean for us to run a campaign and succeed legislatively. And I think I continue through the semester to struggle, not necessarily that it's a bad struggle, but I think it's an intellectual exercise of how did these things work in tandem, given that they require different skills, and are bred out of different philosophies of what it means to make life better for people. And the thing that I'm hoping to do next semester is to be in a clinic. Which though I haven't been able to do as a 2L yet, there's still time in 3L. I'm crossing my fingers that the mediation clinic is the one that pans out for me, because I think it's a really important skill that... It's a different way I think, of being able to be of service to people outside of courts.

Steven Banks:

Great. Saima, any particular experiences or courses that were influential to you? And what did you wish you studied? I think I know what the topic is and I'm going to agree with you, but go ahead.

Saima Akhtar:

You do know my answer to the second part of that. I did a joint degree when I went to law school, so I did a four-year program that was a JD and a Master's in Public Policy. I did not have the flexibility with my coursework that some folks had in their legal education. What would've been sort of chosen classes and electives were occupied by getting a different set of tools from another graduate institution. It was a good choice, but also a very long haul. Four years was a very long time. But I think as I alluded to previously, one of the really critical experiences for me was the work I did outside of law school and graduate school. In practice, working in a legal services organization that gave me robust opportunity, tremendous mentorship, exposure to anything that I wanted to try and learn about.

And in some ways, I think, that's what kept me in law school. I think there was a good chance when I started the master's program, it was not actually clear to me inside my myself that I was going to go back to law school. And if it were not for the opportunities I had in that job, and with a team and the experience then in my case, almost all female attorneys who were sort of coaching me through how to do this and showing me where it could lead to. If I finished my JD, I would've been inclined maybe not to go back.

I had a number of classes that I really loved that were incredibly practical for me. I took a poverty law class that was actually taught by Ray Brescia who's going to be facilitating the next panel after this, and I think he's fantastic. I took a federal jurisdiction class that is very real in terms of the work that I do and the practice that I have. And I had the privilege of taking civil procedure from David Siegel when he was still teaching and with us. I had really good opportunities in law school and I was really miserable a lot of the time anyway. In terms of things that I want people to learn, you do know my answer. Everyone should learn remedies. Everyone should take remedies. Every school should offer remedies. And we should not spend our entire time in remedies talking about money judgments. A dollar is a dollar, is a dollar. We all learn that. There is actually really important work, and tools, and direction to be talked about.

When we look at remedies and we look at injunctive relief, specific performance, and durability of outcome, when we're talking about systems reform and law reform changes, this is pivotal. These are the tools of our trade, and this is what we need to know how to do. We need our students to have impeccable technical understanding of the tools of practicing law. Remedies is part of that. It goes to constructing the relief that every single person needs and that we're actually litigating. We're trying to get if we are rewriting laws, if we are filing cases, if we are rewriting policies and regulations, and working in these systems. And the fact that I was not able to take remedies, and that most of the students I see and talk to do not take it, and it is not sort of a place that they are driven towards in their work is very concerning to me. Everyone

should take remedies. Everyone should offer remedies. Remedies are not just money judgments. That would be my TED talk.

Steven Banks:

Absolutely. You and I can teach it at some place maybe.

Saima Akhtar:

I would love that.

Steven Banks:

Adrian, what did you take that was influential and what did you wish you took?

Adrian Neil:

I'll start with what I wish there was a class in law school called relax, it'll be okay. That would've been very helpful. And to kind of echo what Judge Hannah said, I was a first-generation law student again, first to college from the family, first to law school before me. For my parents, high school education was the limit. It's a lot of pressure for some law students. And you're carrying this mantle. And it's expensive undertaking. I think one of the best things law schools can do is try to again, make sure there's as many support systems in place. And not make it so much of a hamster wheel. I know and it prepares folks for the rigors of the work, and you have to do that part of it. But I think there are more support systems.

The class was the most influential I think, on ultimately, where I am today was a labor class and it was less about the class than it was about professor. And if I recall the professor was also an ex-priest. And so once I got to that class and it was just the interaction, it was just let your passions lead you. Let your passions lead you, do the work. And I think really that set me on the path I am today once. And I think if more law students, again, let some of the other stuff go and let your passions lead you, you will end up where you want to be.

And I think I mentioned it before, but I'll mention it again, there is the experiential learning. There is nothing like it. It will really help crystallize for you what you should be doing. I remember, and this was actually just after law school, there was an access to justice program in New York City, where you did some volunteering, and you get credit, and things like that. And the experience of being in landlord/tenant court, and seeing those folks, and seeing what they were going through, I have never forgotten it. And I think it's something that every law student should do. It should be required, if it's not, go and help in situations like that.

Steven Banks:

Okay. By design. Kim and Bill, who actually been law school professors, are our last two on this round. Kim, what do you think? Meaningful experience in your law school experience in terms of what you're doing now? And what did you wish you learned in law school?

Professor Kim Diana Connolly:

Obviously, clinics. I had a simultaneously magical and agonizing experience for all the reasons we've already talked about clinical experience. And that's obvious. And I had some other courses that Georgetown offered, poverty law, nonprofit, which were really amazing. I got a lot out of those. But I'm going to talk just for a moment about the last day of class in the class that I got my worst grade in law school, which was contracts. Professor Spann taught me contracts, who's an awesome human being. But he was a hard professor for me to study under. But on the last day of class, he stood up and he looked at us, and he said, "I've taught you about contracts, I've taught you about arguments. But what I really want you to leave here knowing, is that you choose what you argue for. And it's your responsibility to recognize and use your power for good." So that was just this moment, one day of class that I still remember to this day, that was my first year of law school. And literally from the man who gave me my worst grade. But a life-changing lesson.

What do I wish we did a little bit more of when I was in law school and the only time I got to really self-reflect was in clinic. I wish there were spaces in law school where we could give students opportunities kind of the, it's okay moment, but also just downtime to self-reflect as they're going through this experience on the pathway to becoming a lawyer. That's what I really wish that we could put in more places. And I think we're doing a better job of that in law schools now. I know we have more attention to wellness, which is really important. And I'd love it woven even further into across the board what students and future lawyers experience. Then they can walk out and continue to be self-reflective in all the lawyering they do.

Steven Banks:

Great. Bill, any comments?

Professor Bill Quigley:

I think like Shivani and a couple of the other people, my greatest experience of law school happened outside of school. It happened in connections with people in the community, connections that I either already had or I was doing volunteer work for. And those folks really taught me. The mothers and grandmothers of a 1,500 apartment housing development, who had little or no education, little or no money. I was there to teach them and to help them. And as it turns out, they taught me and helped me every bit as much as I was able to do with them. And to understand it. I didn't really understand that at the time. Took me a long time to figure that out because I wanted to be a helper. And to realize that if you're really involved with people and in organizations, it is a two-way relationship that you are helping, but you are being helped, you are being transformed as you are assisting other people.

And those were really the best teachers, the best courses that I had. It was being direct in the community. A place where lawyers don't go, law students don't go. And they didn't expect anything from a lawyer or a law student. And I found that that was very, very helpful.

Steven Banks:

Okay, I'm going to ask one last question and there'll be no pressure because every second we take away from Bill's close. So we're going to finish at exactly 2:15 and Bill's got a closer for five minutes. Imagine yourself in an elevator with all of the New York State law school deans. And

you've got 30 seconds before they all get off. What would you want to say in those 30 seconds to help enhance law school education in New York State to produce leaders, and people going into public interest in social justice practice? I know you can all do it in 30 seconds because when Helene Barnett hired me to be a lawyer at Legal Aid many, many decades ago, I practiced law and the judges always said, "Counsel, you have 30 seconds. Tell me what the case is about." So, Judge, we start with you.

Judge Craig Hannah:

Change agents. I want them to focus on making change agents. As we all said before, you can teach Black letter law, but it has to be the passion and in your heart for individuals to want to take what they learn, and apply it to make a better community.

Steven Banks:

Great. Saima, they're all stuck in the elevator with you.

Saima Akhtar:

I think I would probably say that the legal education is not just how we use the tools that we have. It is also about the way that we carry out our practice, our professionalism, our humanity, our compassion for the people we're working with. But also impeccable use of the professional tools we have. People need to be good at procedure. And they need to be good at remedies and they need to be good at putting together a case. If we're in New York, please teach students that the handbook exists because if they're practicing in state court, it's extremely upsetting to discover we don't always blue book. That's what I would say.

Steven Banks:

Great. Adrian.

Adrian Neil:

I would say figure out how to make it less expensive. There are more people who want to do this work than you know. But the cost and what you give up in comparison to your private sector colleagues is prohibitive. And I'd also say start targeting folks before they get to law school, colleges, even high schools, even middle schools. Build that public interest community mindset early on. So when they do go to law school, if that's their choice, they don't think a major law firm or something is the only option.

Steven Banks:

Great. Kim, I know you have access to one of the deans in an elevator anytime you want. But imagine they're all together.

Professor Kim Diana Connolly:

So many great things have already been said. I do think that we need to recognize our places within the community, and be sure to engage with the community, and to recognize the power

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that we have as law schools. And I love the idea of starting with the youth and creating this pipeline of opportunities all the way, and then continuing to urge the alums to be great parts of the access to justice system in whatever way they can as well.

Steven Banks:

Bill.

Professor Bill Quigley:

I would say law schools spent too much time listening to alumni, and listening to the donors, and listening to judges, and other people. And what every law school should do is seek out a person who's head of a tenant council. Seek out person who is a cab driver. Seek out the people who take the bus to be at work at seven o'clock in the morning. Seek out the people who are cooking, and cleaning, and probably in your own law school, and ask them what they are looking for in a lawyer. And what they're going to have to say is going to be a lot different than everybody else. And that's really where we need to go.

Steven Banks:

Terrific. Shivani, I'm giving you the last word for obvious reasons.

Shivani Parikh:

I would say too many law students come in thinking that they're going to learn about justice. And they at the end of their first year or at the end of their time, they feel disempowered to do anything other than find themselves in a cog or do a few decent things for their 50 pro bono hours. How are you making sure that your law students feel that they are not only educated, but also prepared to be advocates?

Steven Banks:

Great. So it was an honor and a pleasure to be with all of you on this panel. And I believe Bill would actually gotten you the amount of time on the schedule to do the call-to-action. So the floor is yours.