

Vance Center eNotes

Presentation of Access to Justice Awards to
Bouchon and LeeVolume 1, Issue 1
June 2009

On November 11, 2008, at the annual International Associates Reception at the New York City Bar, City Bar President Patricia Hynes presented the inaugural *Cyrus R. Vance Access to Justice Award* to two attorneys who have contributed significantly to international justice. The first recipient was Juan Bouchon, a Chilean foreign associate at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. The second recipient was Lawrence Lee, a litigation associate at Debevoise & Plimpton.

(Continued on page 2)



Patricia Hynes, President NYCBAR,
Juan Bouchon, Lawrence Lee, Antonia
Stopper, Vance Center Committee
Chair

Vance Center Announces New Website

The Vance Center has revised and updated its website, www.VanceCenter.org, giving it a new format that is more user-friendly and informative. Please visit our new website to obtain an overview of the Vance Center's organization and projects, and learn how to support our mission.

In this issue:

**Colombia Launches Pro Bono
Foundation**

**Promoting Dialogue Between
Latin America and Africa**

**Vance Center Welcomes New
Volunteers**

Update on the Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas



Elise Colomer, Vance Center and
Paola Larrahondo, Fundacion Pro
Bono Colombia

The Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas was formally launched in January of 2008. It is the first hemispheric initiative to promote pro bono practice and commits signatories to undertake, by 2010, a minimum of 20 hours of pro bono work per lawyer per year. It was drafted over a period of 18 months by representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and the United States.

In the short time since its inception, the PBDA has gained momentum and has been endorsed by more than 400 law firms, bar associations, law schools and NGOs in Latin America and the United States. The text in English, Spanish and Portuguese and the complete list of signatories can be viewed on the Vance Center's website at www.VanceCenter.org. The Vance Center is currently involved in efforts to strengthen pro bono procedures within law firms, help NGOs identify appropriate projects, partner with law schools to promote professional responsibility and collaborate with bar associations to advocate for pro bono practice.

Conferences are one way to strengthen the work underway:

- A conference on the institutionalization of pro bono was held in October of 2008 at the San Andres Law School in Buenos Aires that included representatives from more than 75 law firms from North and South America, as well as members of the New York City Bar Association, the Bar Association of the City of Buenos Aires, Instituto Pro Bono in Brazil, Appleseed Mexico, Pro Bono Foundation in Chile and faculty from the University of San Andres Law School. This

(Continued on page 2)

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at vance@nycbar.org or call 212-382-6795

Access to Justice Awards...

(Continued from page 1)

Juan Bouchon was recognized for his work on the preparation of a comprehensive manual for law firms in Latin America to use in establishing and administering pro bono programs. The manual, to be published in English and Spanish, will assist law firms in institutionalizing their pro bono practices.

Larry Lee was recognized for his work on the preparation of amicus curiae briefs regarding freedom of speech and the protection of journalists in Venezuela filed in connection with two cases before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, as well as for his research on behalf of an international human rights organization challenging broad restrictions placed on non-governmental organizations in regions of Latin America.

Update on the PBDA...

(Continued from page 1)

was the first hemispheric meeting of PBDA signatories since its creation.

- Another roundtable was convened in Buenos Aires to focus exclusively on the advancement of the pro bono work in Argentina. Various members of the legal community gathered to discuss how Argentine NGOs needing legal services and firms willing to provide such assistance could collaborate to their mutual benefit.

- Similar roundtables took place in Bogota in May of 2009. A delegation of lawyers from the private and public bars in Argentina, Chile and the US gathered together with their counterparts in Colombia over the course of two days to discuss the implementation of the PBDA in the country and to attend the launching ceremony of the Fundación Pro Bono Colombia. The meetings, which were co-convened by the Vance Center, Fundación Pro Bono Colombia, Compartamos con Colombia and the Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad

de Los Andes, included roundtable discussions with young attorneys and managing partners, law school clinical directors and leaders of NGOs. The topics discussed ranged from the roles of each actor of the profession in the pro bono chain, to strategies to create an effective and efficient pro bono system, to how to organize law firm pro bono programs, and teach professional responsibility, to ways to identify and structure pro bono projects.

- Roundtables are scheduled to take place in Lima in September.

In addition, the Vance Center is developing publications to assist in PBDA implementation, including:

- A comprehensive manual for law firms to use to build and strengthen pro bono programs entitled “PBDA Implementation Handbook: a Guide to Establishing a Pro Bono Program at your Law Firm.” An advanced copy of this

(Continued on page 3)

Promoting Dialogue Between Latin America and Africa



Africa recently established a continent-wide human rights court, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. With the establishment of this court, Africa's human rights system is similar to that in place in Latin America. On each continent there is now a region-wide human rights commission charged with promoting and protecting human rights and a human rights court with adjudicatory powers.

Recognizing the similarities in the African and Latin American human rights systems, the Vance Center has initiated a “South-South” dialogue to enable human rights advocates in the two regions to share information and ideas, and benefit from each other's insights and experiences.

In the spring of 2008, the Vance Center co-sponsored a roundtable of human rights advocates in Arusha, Tanzania where participants shared ideas about strategies African and Latin American advocates can employ to create strong and effective regional human rights systems. In October of 2008, the Vance Center organized a follow-up roundtable in Buenos Aires at which participants from the two regions developed a list of concrete ways in which they might collaborate, including sharing ideas and information on line and in journals, drafting amicus briefs in cases of concern on both continents, and developing common issues to present to the United Nations

(Continued on page 4)

Vance Center eNotes

Update on the PBDA...

(Continued from page 2)

manual was presented and discussed at an annual meeting of pro bono coordinators convened by Fundación Pro Bono in Chile in March of 2009. The manual will be updated periodically to reflect developments in pro bono practice as it is implemented within law firms.

- A summary of the pro bono work Latin American firms are undertaking, called “Spotlight on Pro Bono.” By describing innovative pro bono projects underway in the region, this publication will enable firms to garner ideas and generate initiatives of their own.

VanceNet, a new website that includes a blog, directory, and discussion forums, will advance the implementation of the PBDA by providing discussion forums where signatories can share pro bono experiences.

Colombia Launches Pro Bono Foundation

Fundación Pro Bono Colombia, a new foundation dedicated to facilitating access to justice for poor individuals and underserved communities, was established on May 13, 2009 at a meeting held in Bogota. Fifteen Colombian law firms gathered to launch the new organization of which they are the founding members, including: Araujo Ibarra & Asociados; Baker & McKenzie; Brigard & Urrutia Abogados; Cárdenas & Cárdenas; Cavalier Abogados; Contexto Legal; Gómez Pinzón Zuleta; Holguín Neira & Pombo; José Lloreda Camacho & Co; Lewin & Wills Abogados; Manrique & Asociados; Muñoz Tamayo & Asociados; Prieto & Carrizosa; Rodríguez Azuero; and Rodríguez & Cavalier Abogados.

To commemorate the launch, the Vance Center visited Colombia with a delegation of lawyers from firms and directors of public interest organizations that provide pro bono assistance in the United States, Argentina and Chile. The team included Elise Colomer, Associate Director of the Vance Center; Todd Crider, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett and former President and current Vice President of the Vance Center Committee; William Dean, Executive Director of Volunteers of Legal Services in New York; Marcela Fajardo, Executive Director of the Fundación Pro Bono in Chile; Marcia Tavares Maack, Associate Director of Pro Bono at Mayer Brown JSM; Taisa Markus, Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCloy; Barbara Mendelson, Morrison & Foerster and Vance Center Committee Member; Gabriel Mesa, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton; Nicholas Rodriguez, Jones Day; Andrew Scherer, Executive Director of Legal Services of New York City; Carlos Silva, Morales & Besa; Ruti Smithline, Morrison & Forester; Antonia Stolper, Shearman & Sterling and President of the Vance Center Committee; and Martin Zapiola Guerrico, Zapiola Guerrico & Asociados and Founding President of Comisión de Trabajo Pro Bono del Colegio de Abogados de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires.



In this picture from left to right: Alejandro Linares (Gómez Pinzón Zuleta); Luis Carlos Neira (Holguín Neira & Pombo); Carlos E. Manrique (Manrique & Asociados); Paula Samper (Gómez Pinzón Zuleta); Enrique Álvarez (José Lloreda Camacho & Co); Alfredo Lewin (Lewin & Wills Abogados); Ricardo López (Araujo Ibarra & Asociados); Paola A. Larrahondo C. (Fundación Pro Bono Colombia); Sergio Rodríguez Azuero (Rodríguez Azuero); Carlos Urrutia (Brigard & Urrutia Abogados); Diego Muñoz Tamayo (Muñoz Tamayo & Asociados); Ernesto Cavalier (Rodríguez & Cavalier Abogados); Luz Clemencia Páez (Cavalier Abogados); Jaime Trujillo (Baker & McKenzie); Jorge Di Terlizzi (Prieto & Carrizosa).

The creation of the Foundation is the culmination of efforts that began with the adoption of the Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas and represents the consolidation of the pro bono initiative in Colombia. We look forward to updating you on the work of the foundation.

Strengthening Access to Justice in Turkey

In January of 2009, the Vance Center organized a visit to the United States for Idil Elveris, a visiting law professor from Bilgi University Law Faculty in Istanbul, Turkey to enable her to learn more about pro bono programs in the United States. The Vance Center set up a schedule for Professor Elveris that included visits to Columbia Law School, the Harlem Community Legal Aid Society, Legal Services of New York City, the City Bar Justice Center, Sanctuary for Families, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Volunteers in Legal Service and Public Counsel in Los Angeles, among others.

Bilgi University specializes in the social sciences and has a tradition of teaching social responsibility. At Bilgi, Profes-



sor Elveris is a lecturer and also runs a legal clinic that provides students with hands on experience in the practice of human rights law. In addition, Professor Elveris has been instrumental in helping the Bilgi University Human Rights Law Research Center set up a pro bono network, through which public interest NGOs are paired with law firms in Istanbul that are willing to provide free legal assistance.

The Bilgi pro bono program is primarily focused on serving the legal needs of female victims of violence in Turkey, on matters ranging from domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape to honor killings.

In addition, the Bilgi program is starting to expand into microfinance for women and the rights of mental health patients. Until recently, pro bono work was relatively unknown in Turkey, but the Bilgi program is working with the Turkish Bar to raise awareness of its importance.

Vance Center Welcomes New Volunteers

Cristina is a Simpson Thacher & Bartlett Public Interest Fellow. Cristina will be working at the Vance Center for the next year. During her tenure at the Vance Center, Cristina will work on the implementation of the Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas. We look forward to sharing periodic updates on Cristina's work here.

Lorena Baqueiro is an attorney from Mexico and past international associate at Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy. Lorena is working on "Spotlight on Pro Bono", a compendium of pro bono projects being implemented by Latin American law firms since signing the Pro Bono Declaration.

Stephanie LeBris is a visiting attorney from Paris. Stephanie will spend the summer working at the Vance Center on the launch and development of VanceNet and expanding the Vance Center's contacts in Francophone Africa.



From left to right: Cristina Quintero, Lorena Baqueiro and Stephanie Le Bris

Promoting Dialogue Between ...

(Continued from page 2)

Human Rights Commission. Over the course of the next year the Vance Center will be working with its partners in Africa and Latin America to implement these and many other constructive proposals that originated at the two roundtables.