Yale Law School’s Temporary Restraining Order Project is proof that from small seeds, deep roots can grow. The project, begun by a student twenty-five years ago, has grown, largely sustained by the interest and commitment of successive decades of law school students. The Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) Project involves law students in the fight against domestic violence by providing assistance to individuals seeking civil temporary restraining orders.

In 1983, Amy Eppler-Epstein ’86 was a first-year law school student looking for volunteer work to keep her grounded. “I had worked in domestic violence issues in college and then went to Appalachia before going to Law School,” she remembers. “When I started Law School I decided I needed to do some volunteer work.” Eppler-Epstein started working at a local battered women’s shelter, where—much to her own surprise—she quickly became the go-to person for all legal questions. When the shelter staff members began asking her about securing restraining orders for some of the shelter’s residents, Eppler-Epstein started thinking about how she—and her fellow students—could help.

With the help of Connie Frontis, an attorney at New Haven Legal Assistance, Eppler-Epstein developed a model for a system in which students could help secure restraining orders for those needing help—and in the spring of 1984 the TRO Project was born.

At its inception, TRO involved a group of approximately thirty private attorneys coordinated by New Haven Legal Assistance who volunteered to supervise YLS students. The attorneys notified the students when a potential client called for help, and the student volunteers would respond by helping interview the person seeking the restraining order and writing up an affidavit on her behalf.

TRO was an immediate success as it offered much needed services to victims of domestic violence and an opportunity for courtroom experience for law school students. Students presented the argument in court while supervising attorneys were present for moral support. “I remember during my first case, the first time I appeared before a judge—I’m not sure if my knees or my client’s were trembling more,” Eppler-Epstein recalls.

Twenty-five years later, TRO is still providing support for victims of domestic violence. Five days a week, for seven hours a day, YLS students staff an office in the New Haven Family Courthouse. Approximately 100 students volunteer with TRO each year. In the 2007–08 academic year, TRO served 278 clients. New Haven Legal Assistance continues to provide training, supervision, and support to the project.

The majority of the student volunteers are first-year students who, like Eppler-Epstein in 1984, are eager to become involved in the community and gain experience working in a courthouse. “As a new student, I joined because it seemed like the most obvious way to interact with the community and start getting involved with legal issues outside of the law school,” says Jon Cochran ’10, who is one of TRO’s current student directors.

Mucht of the TRO volunteers’ time is spent filling out forms and writing out affidavits in order to obtain temporary restraining orders against domestic abusers. “In the course of the semester, TRO volunteers hear the stories of so many individuals, from so many backgrounds, who are victims of domestic violence,” says TRO student director Ilana Gelfman ’09. “We make sure that through their affidavits these individuals’ stories get told, and get told in such a way that the judge will understand the situation and grant the TRO.”

“Calling All TRO Project Alumni”

If you were once a TRO Project volunteer, or you know how to reach someone who was, please contact aeppler-epstein@nhlegal.org or cfrontis@nhlegal.org. We look forward to hearing from you as the TRO Project celebrates twenty-five years!“ We make sure that through their affidavits these individuals’ stories get told, and get told in such a way that the judge will understand the situation and grant the TRO.” —Ilana Gelfman ’09

Photograph by Harold Shapiro
Professor John Donohue
Elected to American Academy of Arts & Sciences

LEIGHTON HOMER SURBEEK Professor of Law John J. Donohue III was elected in April to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, one of the nation’s most prestigious honorary societies and a center for independent policy research.

Donohue is among 210 new Fellows and 19 Foreign Honorary Members elected to the class of 2009. Considered leaders in their field, the new members are chosen from the mathematical and physical sciences; biological sciences; social sciences; humanities and arts; and public affairs, business, and invention.

“John Donohue is an extraordinary economist and legal scholar whose signal accomplishments include path-breaking empirical analyses in a broad range of policy areas, from crime control to employment discrimination to civil rights, said Yale Law School Acting Dean Kate Stith.”

“My election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences is high recognition of his scholarly pre-eminence.”

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Sonia Sotomayor ’79

Nominated to U.S. Supreme Court

AT THE END of May, President Obama nominated federal appeals court judge Sonia Sotomayor ’79 for the seat on the U.S. Supreme Court being vacated by retiring Justice David H. Souter. Sotomayor has served as a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit since October 1998. She previously served as a federal judge for the Southern District of New York. If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, she would be the Court’s first Hispanic justice and its third woman.

“Yale Law School is delighted to see one of its own-Diane Sturm ’72, judge Sonia Sotomayor, nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court,” said Acting Dean Kate Stith. “We have been fortunate that she has had continuing and deep involvement with the Law School—in conferences, moot courts, and guest appearances in classes—during her years on the bench. We congratulate Judge Sotomayor on this tremendous milestone.”

“I have known Sonia Sotomayor since our days together in law school, and I have followed her career with fascination and delight,” said Stephen Carter ’79, William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law at Yale Law School. “She is a warm and wonderful human being, and a thoughtful and fair-minded jurist who will be an excellent addition to the Supreme Court.”

Judge Sotomayor graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University in 1976 and received her J.D. in 1979 from Yale Law School, where she was an editor of The Yale Law Journal and managing editor of the Yale Studies in World Public Order. Yale Law School Sterling Professor of Law Anthony Kinnman ’75, who taught Judge Sotomayor in 1979, said, “I remember Sonia with fondness and admiration from her student days, and my regard for her has only grown with the years as I have followed her remarkable career. Sonia joins heart and head in the way that every great judge must, and understands that wisdom in adjudication requires an abiding loyalty to established principles of law, understood and interpreted, as they necessarily must be, in the human context that gives the law its ultimate justification and aim.”

If confirmed, Judge Sotomayor would join two other Yale Law School graduates currently on the Court—Justice Clarence Thomas ’74 and Justice Samuel Alito ’75.

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Three Yale Law School Students Named Soros Fellows

THREE YALE LAW School students have been named Paul & Daisy Soros New American Fellows for 2009. Carol Afi ’11, Andres Idarraga ’11, and Alexandru Iftimie ’11 will each receive half tuition for two years of graduate study—up to $6,000 per year—at any university in the United States, as well as a $20,000 annual grant.

Of the 354 individuals named Soros Fellows since the program was established in 1997, 42—or 12 percent—have been from Yale Law School. Among the Soros Fellows in I.D. programs, 42 percent have been from Yale Law School.

“We are delighted and honored to have our students so consistently recognized by the Paul and Daisy Soros Foundation and grateful for the opportunity afforded, not just to our students, but to the many gifted New Americans nationwide who will help shape our country’s future,” said Yale Law School Acting Dean Kate Stith.

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Morris Cohen Donates
Children’s Law Book Collection to Law Library

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN about law and justice, crime and criminals, lawyers and judges, and courts and cases are part of a fascinating collection now residing in the Lillian Goldman Law Library, thanks to the generous donation of Morris L. Cohen, Professor Emeritus and Librarian Emeritus at Yale Law School.

Cohen donated his “Juvenile Jurisprudence Collection” this past October. He was director of the Law Library from 1981 until his retirement in 1990.

“Morris Cohen is one of the great law librarians and book collectors of the twentieth century, and it is an honor to have this unique collection,” said Michael Widener, Rare Book Librarian at the Law Library.

“We are so happy that future generations of library users will be able to get a glimpse of Morris’s delightful sense of humor and excellent book collecting skills when they browse this collection or draw upon it for their research,” added Law Librarian Blair Kaufmann.

Professor Cohen began accumulating children’s books related to law around 1960 as a hobby he shared with his then six-year-old son Dan. The result of the nearly five-decade effort was a delightfully diverse assortment of 200 books written for children—some intended to educate, some to entertain, and some to provide moral instruction. They comprise a variety of formats—from storybooks to pamphlets to coloring books to textbooks. The oldest book in the collection dates from 1793.

Professor Cohen says he donated his collection because of his affection for the Law Library and its Rare Book Collection.

“This Library was the capstone of my fifty-year-long career in legal education at Columbia, Buffalo, Pennsylvania, Harvard, and Yale,” said Professor Cohen. “It is my hope that students here can study this unique collection and see how our law was, and still is, being disseminated and forming an important part of our children’s civic education.”

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The Pursuit of Justice in Darfur Among Spring Conference Topics

ON FEBRUARY 6, Yale Law School hosted an all-day conference to consider the role international criminal prosecution should play in the strategy to end the violence in Darfur and other massive conflicts. "The Pursuit of International Criminal Prosecution: The Case of Darfur" brought together more than 50 policymakers, scholars, students, and others who heard International Criminal Court Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo, in his keynote address, describe the atrocities committed against civilians in Darfur and call for the indictment of Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Moreno-Ocampo said the conference was an opportunity to design and promote a comprehensive solution for the people of Darfur.

"It is an opportunity for diplomats and..."
A series of roundtable discussions considered what peace would look like in Darfur, the role of justice and how the pursuit of ICC prosecutions would affect the diplomatic situation, and managing the relationship between peace and justice going forward.

Continued from page 7.

global leaders to apply new solutions to solve international conflicts, for professors to provide a new framework of analysis, and for student and advocates to promote global collective action,” he said.

The Darfur conference was sponsored by the Orville H. Schell, Jr. Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School, with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Many other student organizations and Law School centers also sponsored conferences this spring, including the Information Society Project, which hosted a Library 2.0 Symposium and an Open Video Conference. The 12th Annual Limm Colloquium marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of Yale Law School’s clinical program with a special presentation on clinical education that also celebrated the contributions of clinical professors: Professor Dennis Curtis ’66, Frank Dineen ’66, Carroll Lucht, and Stephen Wizner (see pages 42–43). Yale Law Women hosted “Out! Out! Or Pushed Out? Are Women Choosing to Leave the Legal Profession?” and the Bernstein International Human Rights Fellowship Symposium examined “Immigration Policy in the New Century.”

Other notable conferences included the 15th Annual Rebellious Lawyering Conference, the Federalist Society National Student Symposium, a Global Health Symposium, a conference on Critical Race Theory, and the Aspiring Scholars Symposium sponsored by the Graduate Programs at Yale Law School.
YLS students secure $11.5 Million Refinancing for Shaw’s Supermarket Plaza

For the second time in ten years, Yale Law School clinic students played a major role in the revitalization of New Haven’s Shaw’s Plaza. The students are part of the Community and Economic Development Clinic at Yale Law School, which assists local small businesses and nonprofit organizations dealing with community development issues. A number of students participated in this project over the course of sixteen months. They were rewarded for their hard work on March 31, when, led by Zhong, they closed the $11,545,000 deal ensuring that Shaw’s and the other tenants of the plaza would continue to operate.

“The students took on an enormous task with this project,” said Yale Law School Clinical Lecturer Robin Golden ’98, the clinic’s supervisor. “Their work required that they spend almost a semester putting together a refinancing proposal to various investors that was both attractive to banks and reasonable for the nonprofit groups involved.”

To complete the proposal, they had to dig through ten years of records to figure out the corporate structure of Coral New Haven Associates II, LLC, the company that owns the Shaw’s plaza, the relationship between the GDDC and its equity partner, and the restrictions placed on the development by Coral II’s operating agreement. They also had to deal with lease and mortgage negotiations and finding tenants for spaces that became vacant during the course of the project. Over the fall and winter terms, with the help of pro bono attorneys at Paul Weiss and Updike, Kelly & Spellacy, the students negotiated the terms of the loan documents with the bank. With Golden’s blessing, Zhong handled the closing herself.

“I’m really grateful for the confidence GDDC had in the clinic,” said Zhong. “It entrusted the entire refinancing project and hence the survival of the Shaw’s Plaza in our hands.”

For more information on YLS clinical activities, visit www.law.yale.edu/clinics.

IN JANUARY, the Middle East Legal Studies Seminar (MELSS) met in Abu Dhabi to discuss “The State and Legitimacy in the Middle East.” Pictured here are Professor Tony Kronman ’75, His Excellency Sheikh Sultan bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, and Professor Own Fiss. Cofounded by Professors Kronman and Fiss in 1998, MELSS brings together scholars, students, jurists, and practicing lawyers for high-level discussions of legal issues relevant to the Middle East. The MELSS 2010 conference is scheduled to take place in Morocco.

Visiting the Law School

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal ’71 [1] delivered a Dean’s Lecture April 20 on the subject, “Leadership through Lawyering.” Blumenthal is serving an unprecedented fifth term as Connecticut’s attorney general, having first been elected in 1990. Robert Harrington ’91, chief executive officer of the Clinton Global Initiative, gave a Dean’s Lecture April 21 titled “Re-defining the Model for Addressing the Great Global Challenges.”


On January 30, the Honorable Louise Ackworth, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2004 to 2008, delivered the Judge Jon O. Newman Lecture on Global Justice on March 23. The lecture was titled “Peace and Justice: A Framework for Peaceful Co-existence.” Ackworth, a former justice of the Canadian Supreme Court, is currently president and CEO of International Crisis Group, an independent, non-partisan organization committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict worldwide.

Professor Steven N. Kaplan discussed “Are U.S. CEOs Overpaid?” at the Judge Ralph K. Winter Lecture on Corporate Law and Governance on March 2. Kaplan is the Neubauer Family Professor of Entrepreneurship and Finance at University of Chicago’s Graduate School of Business and one of the world’s foremost researchers on corporate governance, private equity, and venture capital.

U.S. Senator Ron Finkielst of Wisconsin delivered the Sam and Ronnie Heyman Lecture on Public Service February 2. The video lecture was titled "Where Law’s King: Restoring the Rule of Law after the Bush Administration.”


Judith Scott [6], General Counsel for the Service Employees International Union in Washington, D.C., gave the Perskel-Sherman Lecture February 9. Her talk was titled “Standing up for the Real Joe the Plumber: Social Justice Lawyering in the Age of Obama.”

To watch streaming video of selected events, visit www.law.yale.edu/news.