

By Professor Arthur D. Wolf, Director

# INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

## SUMMARY OF EVENTS FOR SPRING 2013



(L to R) Professor and Director of our International Human Rights Clinic Lauren Carasik; Peter Iannuzzi; Nicholas Duffy; and Professor Matthew Charity

The highlights of the spring semester were two programs that reflect the Institute's ongoing commitment to housing justice and preparing students to become legal scholars.

First, we were a cosponsor of the seventh annual Fair Housing and Civil Rights Conference, which was held on April 11-12. The Conference coincided with the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Federal Fair Housing Act on April 11, 1968.

Second, for the thirteenth consecutive year, we hosted two students from Siena College under its dynamic summer legal fellows program, which Siena has with a handful of select law schools. This year, Nicholas Duffy and Peter Iannuzzi spent eight weeks on campus working with Professor Matthew Charity and Professor Lauren Carasik, the Director of our International Human Rights Clinic.

- On April 11-12, the Seventh Annual Conference offered a two-day program covering a variety of subjects to mark the 45th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. Our presenters and speakers explored far-ranging topics in fair housing and civil rights, including predatory lending, residential segregation, protecting military veterans, immigration, disability and employment discrimination, issues relating to LGBT people, natural disasters and civil rights, affirmative action, and hate crimes.
- The Siena College summer program provides the opportunity for rising seniors to expand their understanding of the legal profession and gain real world experience working alongside professors. Nick

Duffy assisted Professor Charity researching instances where the U.S. Supreme Court has failed to apply international law standards to protect minority group victims suing in United States courts under federal law.

Nick's research focused largely on *Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum Co.*, a recent Supreme Court case. In that decision, the Justices rejected claims under the Federal Alien Tort Statute, 28 U.S.C. § 1350, asserted by Nigerian nationals against Royal Dutch Petroleum and others. The complaint alleged that throughout the 1990s the private defendants aided and abetted Nigerian military and police forces who beat, raped, and killed Nigerians, and destroyed or looted their property.

Peter Iannuzzi worked with Professor Carasik. His research focused on Vieques, a small island off the coast of Puerto Rico, where the U.S. Navy conducted military training from the 1940s until 2003. The civilian population of the island continues to experience increased incidences of cancer and higher mortality rates, and other harmful health effects due to the toxic chemicals tested by the Navy on the island.

Peter's research is the necessary predicate for drafting a petition to be filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an international agency that receives human rights complaints against members of the Organization of American states. The petition seeks a remedy for those adversely affected by the Navy's decades of military training and munitions testing. Because the residents of Vieques have exhausted all of their domestic remedies without success, the petition would seek to hold the United States and the Navy responsible for the island's toxic legacy. If successful, the petition would require further decontamination measures to make the island livable once again. ♦