GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF LAW
WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS CLINIC

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Summer 2024 Newsletter

Despite Law School Closure, WERC Will Continue at GGU

Despite the law school's closure, the Women's Employment Rights Clinic will continue to be housed at GGU and will continue representing low-wage workers in their fight for their employment rights, serving as a training-ground for the next generation of lawyers and engaging in policy and advocacy projects for California's low-wage workforce. Professor Raven will lead the clinic and continue its over 30-year trajectory serving low wage workers.

WERC Spring 2024 Students Successfully Represented Low-Wage Workers in Harassment, Discrimination and Retaliation Cases

The Clinic continued its partnership with the California Civil Rights Department (CRD), representing low-wage workers in mediations of their discrimination, harassment, and retaliation claims. Ten Golden Gate law students participated in WERC during the Spring 2024 semester. Students represented agricultural workers, retail workers, warehouse workers, and other workers in the CRD all-day mediations.

In preparation for the mediations, students reviewed workers' complaints, conducted client interviews, developed a fact and legal investigation plan, researched case and statutory law, drafted mediation briefs, prepared exhibits and talking points. Student pairs ultimately represented their clients before CRD mediators, leading to several successful settlements.

Above: WERC Spring 2024 students Jac Lyons, Amir Shirazi, Professor Raven, Reagan Rice, Justine Tran, Olivia Scott, and Ashley Valera at the Clinic's end-of-the-semester celebration.

WERC Fights Back Against Sexual Harassment of Agricultural Workers

This semester, WERC students represented three agricultural workers who faced sexual harassment while working in the fields. Sexual harassment of agricultural workers is pervasive, and many agricultural workers do not come forward due to isolation, large power differentials, language barriers, inability to navigate our legal system and threats of deportation, among other reasons.

William R. Tamayo, a former Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) San Francisco District Office Director, came and spoke to WERC students about lessons learned in the representation of agricultural workers with sexual

harassment claims.

Mr. Tamayo was an EEOC's Regional Attorney when in 1999, two employees and a class of current and former Tanimura & Antle employees, brought claims of sexual harassment and retaliation in Salinas, California, and Yuma, Arizona, reaching a $1,855,000 settlement. WERC collaborated with the EEOC's San Francisco District Office on the case. Mr. Tamayo talked to students about his experience litigating the Tanimura & Antle case, as well as other cases on behalf of agricultural workers. His work was profiled in the 2013 Frontline Documentary Rape in the Fields.

WERC Supports PAGA, Survivors and Survivors' Family Members, and Workers with Intersectional Claims

To support workers, WERC participated in the California Employment Lawyers Association's (CELA) Lobby Day in Sacramento on April 2, 2024. WERC student Jac Lyons and Professor Ramirez Lee, spoke to California legislators and staffers about protecting California's Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) from corporate efforts to eliminate the law. They highlighted PAGA's importance in combating wage theft and forced arbitration.

They also spoke about supporting SB 1137, a bill sponsored by Senator Smallwood Cuevas, which would make California the first state in the nation to explicitly recognize intersectionality (e.g., discrimination or harassment based on one or more protected characteristics, such as race and gender). Finally, they urged legislators and staffers to support AB 2499, a bill authored by Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo, which aims to ensure that family members of living, direct victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other violence can take unpaid time off to address safety concerns, to heal, or to support their family.

Above: WERC Spring 2024 Student Jac Lyons and Professor Ramirez Lee with CELA members and staff and Senator Smallwood Cuevas at CELA's 2024 Lobby Day in Sacramento on April 2, 2024.

WERC Meets to Discuss the California Strategic Enforcement Partnership

On March 13-14, 2024, Professor Ramirez Lee represented WERC at the California Strategic Enforcement Partnership's (CSEP) annual planning meeting in Los Angeles. CSEP is a collaboration between 17 workers' rights organizations or community-based organizations (CBOs), the state Labor Commissioner's Office, and the National Employment Law Project (NELP). The partnership is entering its

second year and aims to recover stolen wages for low-wage workers, raise labor standards, and shift industry practices in particularly vulnerable industries.

Above: Members of the California Strategic Enforcement Partnership at the annual planning meeting in LA on March 14, 2024.

GOLILA brings together Latina Law Professors from All Over the U.S.

The Graciela Olivárez Latinas in the Legal Academy (GO LILA) third annual workshop took place on May 21-22, 2024 at Berkeley Law, and encompassed a range of activities aimed at enhancing participants' scholarship and professional growth. Latinas comprise just 1.6% of tenured and tenure-track law professors and the initiative is named after Graciela Olivárez, who became the nation's first Latina law professor in 1972. Golden Gate Law students Estefani Munive (3L) and Amina Kribeche (1L) attended a dinner with Latina law professors on the first night of the conference. Professor Ramirez Lee served on the Planning Committee for this year's workshop.

Above: Estefani Munive (3L), Amina Kribeche (1L) and Professor Ramirez Lee with GOLILA participants at the GOLILA dinner on May 21, 2024.

Professor Ramirez Lee to Begin Two-Year Teaching Fellowship at UC Law SF

On July 1, 2024, Professor Ramirez Lee will begin a two-year teaching fellowship as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Center for Racial and Economic Justice (CREJ) at UC Law SF (formerly Hastings). The position is aimed at developing coursework and scholarship on issues of race, identity, inequality, and marginalization. Though we will miss her and appreciate all her contributions to WERC, we think it's a fantastic opportunity and wish her all the best!

Above: WERC Spring 2024 students Ashley Valera, Thea Dibb, Professor Ramirez Lee, Olivia Scott, and Justine Tran at the Clinic's end-of-the-semester celebration.