

7-23-2019

**Social Justice in Legal Clinics: The Nonprofit and Small Business
Clinic at New York Law School**

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By Anna G. Cominsky, Visiting Associate Professor of Law and Supervising Attorney at New York Law School

Social justice is an integral part of Associate Professor of Law Gowri Krishna's Nonprofit and Small Business Clinic. *"I think of my clinic broadly as a social justice clinic,"* Krishna says, *"We support people and organizations that work for social, and environmental equity."* Students in the yearlong Clinic provide transactional legal assistance to nonprofit businesses. Under close faculty supervision by Krishna, students interview and counsel clients; plan and strategize on legal questions of law; draft correspondence, memos and legal documents; manage client relationships; and negotiate as their primary responsibility for work with multiple clients on a variety of matters such as entity formation, governance, and regulatory compliance.

The Clinic is comprised of seminar and fieldwork experience for both fall and spring semesters. During the fall semester, students focus on substantive areas of law, ethics and lawyering skills. Students prepare for and lead case rounds in which they share reflections on their fieldwork.

Clinic clients range from start-ups to more mature entities. Clients generally come from or benefit low-income communities that cannot afford market rates for legal services. *"We represent nonprofit groups and small businesses on non-litigation matters such as formation, governance, contracts, leases, etc. The nonprofit organizations have varying missions that aim to improve the lives of the most vulnerable in some way, whether it is providing preschool programs for children in public housing, working in the culinary sector, or developing affordable housing policies (a sampling of this past year's clinic clients)."*

The Clinic helps students explore and understand a new economic system, commonly referred to as the solidarity economy. It is a movement to build a just and dependable economy. *"Many of the small businesses we assist are ones that fit in with the solidarity economy. They value democracy and cooperation and operate their business according to these principles. Transactional lawyers help them and create new ones to meet their clients' goal of prioritizing labor over capital. They counsel clients on governance and ensure democratic participation by all of the workers in a business. This type of legal work is cutting-edge, requiring attorneys to work in novel ways. Law school clinics, nonprofit legal services, and private law offices should seek and embrace the solidarity economy."*

This is a critical time in our history. Clinics, like Krishna's, now more than ever have the ability to promote social lawyers. The Clinic helps prepare students for work with organizational clients and introduces students to opportunity to further economic, environmental, racial and social justice. *"My hope is that by getting to know their clients and objectives, students will sharpen their critical thinking and creative lawyering skills and consider their role in effecting change."*

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