



The Pre-Law e-Newsletter from Pre-Professional Programs & Advising

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- 1. Message from Ana L. Droscoski, Esq.**
 - 2. Legal Education & the Legal Industry in the Media**
 - 3. Opportunity: Paralegal/Legal Assistant Positions (Full-Time) at BigLaw Firms**
 - 4. Interview: Rossana Bianco, Court Attorney, NYC Family Courts**
 - 5. Upcoming Pre-Law Student Meeting & Program Announcements**
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1. MESSAGE FROM ANA L. DROSCOSKI, ESQ.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving break! The next and final e-Newsletter of the Fall 2014 semester will issue on Friday, December 5.

2. LEGAL EDUCATION & THE LEGAL INDUSTRY IN THE MEDIA

The New York Times Editorial Board. **"Driving Student Borrowers Into Default."** *The New York Times*. Web. 3 Nov. 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/04/opinion/driving-student-borrowers-into-default.html?_r=0 -- editorial calls for Congress to regulate private student loan lenders so that borrowers receive the same consumer protections as they do with federal student loans.

Toobin, Jeffrey. **"The Legal One Per Cent"** *The New Yorker*. Web. 6 Nov. 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/legal-one-per-cent> -- Toobin opines that most law students "are getting the legal-education equivalent of the subprime loans that helped sink the national economy."

Lewontin, Max. **"Are We Forgiving Too Much Student-Loan Debt?"** *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Web. 7 Nov. 2014. <http://chronicle.com/article/Are-We-Forgiving-Too-Much/149883/> -- discusses whether Congress should cap the total amount of loan forgiveness available under the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, enacted as part of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, and the first bills for which will be due in 2017 when the ten-year window has run for the first borrowers eligible for loan forgiveness under the program.

3. OPPORTUNITY: PARALEGAL/LEGAL ASSISTANT POSITIONS (FULL-TIME) AT BIGLAW FIRMS

For those taking 1-2 gap years and looking to get some experience in a legal setting, consider applying to a paralegal/legal assistant position at a BigLaw firm. Highlighted below is a link from our website discussing these opportunities:*

Many law firms offer formal paralegal/legal assistant programs for recent college graduates. Generally, the programs are for a two year term, include orientation/training, and assignment to a specific department. For those interested in these programs and working at a law firm upon graduation -- many of which are located in DC or NYC -- be sure to take a look at the links listed below:

Arnold & Porter: http://www.arnoldporter.com/careers_legal_support_services.cfm

Clearly Gottlieb: <http://www.cgsh.com/careers/?recruitingID=2134>

Covington: <http://www.cov.com/careers/washington/staff/paralegals/>

Akin Gump: <http://www.akingump.com/careers/staff/>

Cravath: <http://www.cravath.com/staff/legalassistants/>

Davis Polk: <http://www.davispolk.com/careers/staff/>

Hogan Lovells: http://www.hoganlovells.com/careers/staff_paralegal.aspx

Holland & Knight LLP: <http://www.hklaw.com/Careers/Jobs/>

Kirkland & Ellis LLP: <http://www.kirkland.com/sitecontent.cfm?contentID=283>

Mintz, Levin: <http://mintz.com/careers.php>

Morgan, Lewis: <http://www.morganlewis.com/index.cfm/nodeID/74DB57CE-AD61-4DFC-8B9C-B249F20A6EEC/fuseaction/content.page>

Paul, Weiss: <http://www.paulweiss.com/careers/paralegals/litigation-paralegal-job-description.aspx>

Proskauer: <http://www.proskauer.com/careers/paralegals/>

Shearman & Sterling LLP: <http://www.shearman.com/en/careers/americas/united-states/us-legal-assistants>

Sidley Austin: <http://www.sidley.com/careers/professionalstaff/northamerica/>

Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP: <http://www.stblaw.com/your-career/administrative-positions>

Skadden: <http://www.skadden.com/career/assistants>

Sullivan & Cromwell: <http://sullcrom.com/sandc-careers>

Wachtell Lipton: <http://wlrk.com/paralegals/>

White & Case LLP: <http://www.whitecase.com/careers/northamerica/legalassistants/careerpath/>

Willkie: <http://www.willkie.com/recruiting/recruiting.aspx>

This is just a sampling of firms that hire recent graduates; be sure to conduct additional research on your own. Also, note that these firms may have offices in additional cities. Use the above firm websites as a starting point to come up with a list of firms in your preferred city!

*http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/law/legal_intern_fellow/private.html

4. INTERVIEW: ROSSANA BIANCO, COURT ATTORNEY, NYC FAMILY COURTS

Rossana Bianco has been a Court Attorney for the New York City Family Courts of the New York State Unified Court System for nearly 5 years. As a Court Attorney, she conducts case conferences; researches complex legal issues and drafts legal memoranda; drafts decisions and orders; and drafts quasi-appellate child support objection decisions. Prior to this, she was a contract attorney at several law firms around NYC for about a year, following her work as a Staff Attorney at Day One for nearly 2 years. As a Staff Attorney at Day One, Ms. Bianco provided legal representation to young victims of domestic violence/dating abuse in the Family Courts and Integrated Domestic Violence Courts in New York City for family offense, custody, visitation and child support matters.

Ms. Bianco received her Juris Doctor from New England School of Law where she was a Massachusetts Bar Foundation Fellow; an Equal Justice Works Summer Corps Member; a CALI Award in Mental Health Issues in Criminal Procedure Recipient; a Public Interest Law Association Grant Recipient and a Charles Hamilton Houston Scholar.

Prior to attending law school, Ms. Bianco spent one year in Chile teaching English. After that, she worked for Kaplan Test Prep as a Student Services Coordinator for several months, as she knew she wanted to go to grad school (for psychology) and thought it would be a good way to get the inside scoop on test prep and some "relevant" experience. Following her time at Kaplan, Ms. Bianco worked in the research division of Safe Horizon, a victim services agency, studying domestic violence, recidivism and lethality. At Safe Horizon, she interviewed battered women in the family courts around NYC, and it was at that point that she decided to go to law school. As such, she took a job as a legal assistant at a personal injury law firm where she remained until she entered law school.

Ms. Bianco received her Bachelor of Arts with Honors and graduated *cum laude* from the University of North Carolina, where she double majored in Philosophy and Psychology.

Rossana Bianco is member of the New York State Bar and is fluent in Spanish.

Describe a day in the life of a Court Attorney for a NYC Family Court Judge.

Though it's difficult to sum up the job of a court attorney in a short list (it also depends on what sub-specialty you work in), as a court attorney who works for a judge that hears child protective cases, my work includes the following:

- legal research
- legal writing, including drafting research memos, motion reviews, decisions on motions, decisions after trial

- conference child protective cases - because of the volume of cases we see, all child protective cases go to the court attorney for a series of conferences in order to gather information, track the case and see whether it's moving toward settlement/resolution or trial
- review adoptions for approval and finalization (these come from the cases where parental rights have been terminated and we also get private adoptions)
- write child support objection decisions - all judges (by way of their court attorneys) have to rule on objections to child support decisions since child support matters are not heard by judges, but by support magistrates, so these decisions are considered quasi-appellate decisions
- administrative tasks: this includes fielding questions and requests for adjournments from attorneys, fielding correspondence that comes to the judge, monthly court attorney meetings, etc.

A typical day includes office work and courtroom/conferencing work. My job is to basically do anything my judge needs me to do. I keep my own calendar of cases to conference each day (they are all the judge's cases but I conference different cases than she hears on a given day). I review any motions and orders to show cause (motions for emergency relief) that come in on a given day and brief the judge on those. I draft legal decisions on motions and on cases after trial and do whatever legal research is required to write these. My office time is spent reviewing adoption files, write child support objection decisions, reviewing proposed orders, attorney vouchers, researching/writing decisions, etc.

2) What initially attracted you to this field? What are some of the rewards of this area of law and the legal profession?

To be honest, family law was not the area of law that I had my eye on. But, if there is one thing that they don't teach you in law school, it's that the market, and not necessarily your interests, will dictate what job you get and what path you go down. When I decided to go to law school, it was with the intention of doing public interest/public service work. My internships landed me doing work in family law and immigration law, mostly. My first job out of law school was working for a domestic violence non-profit organization representing teen victims of dating abuse/intimate partner violence in family court matters. I found the job of a court attorney to be a potentially interesting and unique experience to pursue. I submitted my resume a couple of times and crossed my fingers.

3) What are some of the downsides of this area of law?

Family law is a very challenging and frustrating area of law to work in. It's difficult litigating issues that are so intimately tied to people's families, home life and emotions. Things get very messy and complicated and the law is very subjective in this area. Some of the rewards come when you help a family put itself back together. People tend to see the family court (and child protective services) as entities that tear families apart. And, it would be disingenuous to say that that's not what happens frequently. But, as a court, our role and our job is to keep children safe and, if they are taken away from their parents for whatever the reasons may be (domestic violence, drug use, educational neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, etc.) our goal is to reunify them with their parents when it's safe and appropriate. It's not easy for any of the players to navigate a system with so many broken pieces, navigate a society with so many broken pieces. We do the best we can.

How would you compare the reality of your profession to the picture you had of it while in school?

As someone who always wanted to do public interest/public service work and had the unique opportunity to do it during law school through internships, the reality is pretty similar to the picture that

was painted for me during law school. I guess I would say that one big eye opener that I've had throughout my career is realizing how the court system cannot serve as a place to fix people's problems. By the time they come through our doors, the issues we see are so ingrained in these families that all we can do is try to do band aid repairs little by little in the hopes that if they're held together long enough, they'll start to heal. The solution to the problems we see in this court every day cannot be solved by filing a petition. Prevention is key and that prevention must come very, very early on.

4) Do you have any advice for an undergraduate interested in pursuing this body of law and the legal profession?

The #1 rule I tell any prospective law students is DO NOT go to law school straight from college. Take a year off. Take two years off. Take three years off. Then decide if law is for you. The legal profession is not like what you see on TV and in the movies. Work in law. Get some experience. Make sure that you know why you want to be a lawyer, what kind of life you want to lead and what you want to accomplish. It's a huge undertaking that I've seen too many of my peers regret later on. Despite my enormous student loans, as someone who took almost 4 years off between college and law school, my decision to pursue this field was much more sound because of being a little bit older and having had some work experience (even though it wasn't law-related at all). I'm happy that I went to law school and I believe that I made the right choice for myself. It doesn't necessarily mean I will want to be a lawyer for the rest of my life. Honestly, I can't imagine wanting to do any one profession forever. But, a law school education is invaluable and if it weren't so out of reach, I would recommend that everybody get one. The things you learn about the law, society, our government, how or systems are structured, how our world works, are invaluable.

Contact Information

If you would like to learn more about being a NYC court attorney, family law, or would otherwise like to contact Rossana Bianco, you may reach her at: rbianco@nycourts.gov.

5. UPCOMING PRE-LAW STUDENT MEETINGS & PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming LSAT Administration

Location: Visit <http://www.lsac.org/id/lsat/testing-locations> for testing location information.

Date: December 6, 2014 / February 7, 2015 / June 8, 2015

Time: Registration begins at 8:30 am for the December & February exams -- consult with LSAC for all controlling details.

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Please feel free to use the resource library between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. every day or visit our website <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/> for additional information.

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