

2004 JUSTICE CENTER PROGRAMS

Housing Court Conference

In October 2004, the Justice Center convened a conference, “The New York City Housing Court in the 21st Century: Can It Better Address the Problems Before It?” The Conference was co-sponsored by the Jacob Burns Ethics Center at Cardozo Law School, Columbia Law School and the Louis Stein Center for Law and Ethics of Fordham University School of Law. Occasioned by the 30th anniversary of the Court, the conference began with a reception for current and retired Housing Court judges. The following day, 82 invited participants, drawn from both the landlord and tenant bars, the judiciary, government, legal academia and public advocacy organizations, came together to consider the challenges the Court is facing in light of ever changing social and economic conditions, assess its performance, and develop recommendations for change.

The plenary session, moderated by Hon. Fern Fisher, Administrative Judge of the Civil Court of the City of New York, featured the following panelists: John D. Feerick, Chair of the NYCLA Justice Center and former Dean of Fordham Law School; Hon. Marcy S. Friedman, New York State Supreme Court; Conrad A. Johnson, Professor, Columbia Law School; Maria Mottola, Executive Director, New York Foundation; and Jonathan Newman, Finkelstein Newman LLP. Conference participants then spent the rest of the day in small working groups, each of which discussed one of the following broad subjects concerned the Housing Court and its work: pre-adjudication steps in the Housing Court; the adjudicative process and the role of the Court; right to counsel; litigants of diminished capacity; preserving the housing stock; and social services and volunteer programs in the Court.

In a closing plenary, the working groups reported on the recommendations for change that emerged from their deliberations. NYCLA published a Conference report, which is being used as a blueprint for action by the follow-up task force President Reimer appointed. The **Task Force on the Housing Court** is co-chaired by Hon. Marcy Friedman, Justice, New York State Supreme Court, and Paula Galowitz, Clinical Professor of Law, New York University School of Law. Additionally, the *Cardozo Public Law, Policy and Ethics Journal* published the Conference proceedings, along with four papers commissioned for the Conference.

Report/Resolution on Homelessness

In April 2004, NYCLA adopted a Report/Resolution on Homelessness prepared by the Justice Center, which called for elected officials and bar associations to oppose anticipated federal and state budget cuts of \$352 million for programs that provide services to homeless families and seek to prevent homelessness. Additionally, proposed funding cuts in the areas of food assistance, child care and health care to New York’s neediest families who are not homeless increased the likelihood that these families may subsequently become homeless. This report was widely distributed to local, state and federal officials, as well as bar associations throughout New York State. Several bars have endorsed the report and local, state and federal elected officials agreed to bring the issue to the attention of their colleagues.

Forum and Documentary Film Screening on Electronic Recording of Interrogations

In March 2004, the Justice Center co-sponsored a forum held at NYCLA with the NYCLA Criminal Justice Section and Civil Rights Committee, the New York Criminal Bar Association and the New York Women's Bar Association. The forum, "Beware of False Confessions! Should All Custodial Interrogations of Crime Suspects be Videotaped?," discussed items addressed in the NYCLA report, such as the need for and value of recording custodial interrogations, objections to this practice and practical limitations, and information from jurisdictions where this policy is in place.

Shortly after the forum, NYCLA hosted a private screening of "The Interrogation of Michael Crowe," a dramatization of a true story of the interrogation and coerced confession of a 14-year-old boy accused of murdering his sister in 1998. DNA evidence later exonerated him.