

Issues surrounding immigration and refugee policies have been at the forefront of recent national news. Often, our attention is focused on the impact of the new policies on those attempting to enter the country. This edition of Voices of Excellence shares stories and experiences from some of our friends and visitors originally from other parts of the world, exploring some of the struggles they encountered in the United States and the lasting impact that positive, welcoming environments have had on their lives.

My Journey Halfway Across the World

India, like most nations in the Global South, does not have an adequate number of quality post-graduate universities. Moreover, as is the trend in other relatively young nations, India's domestic corporations have largely been unable to compete with giant multinationals with starting-point advantages. This means the country's graduate universities churn out a large number of talented, educated, and aspirational individuals every year, but when the Sundar Pichais and Indira Nooyis of India come out of their academic oysters, they find the structural cards stacked against them.

I stepped out of the country I was born in for the first time 15 days before law school started. I left my parents, my friends, a long-term relationship, and the life I had known for 21 years behind me, with the knowledge that I could be gone for a very long time.

I love my country. I love its culture. I love the food. I love speaking in a dialect that involves assimilating Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and English in one short sentence. I love knowing where every street leads. I love being in on every single cultural joke. When I came to the United States, a much greater challenge than dealing with 1L was learning a new way of life.

I learned to adjust my accent so I wouldn't be asked "what's that?" every other sentence. I learned how to type—no, there are no typing classes in India. I learned to live meagerly because every dollar was worth 70 rupees. I learned to change the definition of home-cooked food. Moving was about getting so utterly lost in a superstore that I'd walk out without buying a thing. It was about keeping track of the time difference so I could make a call back home, and it was about knowing when the distance had seeped so deep into relationships that calling would not do the trick.

Lest someone get me wrong, I am glad to be here. I have the opportunity to study at a premier international university, and I have had the good fortune of meeting some amazing individuals. Finally understanding the hype over the Super Bowl was oddly gratifying, and I would, any day, prefer a bagel over a *parantha* for breakfast. The past year has given me a strength of character that I think will take me a long way in life. The fact that I have been welcomed by everyone I have met here with open arms fills up my heart.

But the larger, often ignored point that I have tried to make is that being forced to choose between one's roots and wings can divide a person's life in two—much like my English is now divided between how I speak to people back home and how I speak to people in the United States. The larger point is that people's choices to move their lives entirely onto a new continent are never devoid of strong structural reasons, just like they are not devoid of sacrifices.

Sumridhi is a Cornell Law School student who participated in the 2018 Diversity 1L Summer Associate Program, working out of the firm's Rochester office.



Sumridhi Kaur

QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

"I look on our country as more of a beautiful mosaic, with different kinds of people involved in freedom, individuality, pride, cooperation, understanding; searching for answers to difficult questions in their own way, each contributing, hopefully, the strongest characteristic of their background and heritage and special sensitivity to a common purpose."

- President Jimmy Carter, February 1977

Barclay Damon Summer Associate Program Experience

Law students and professors often talk about the intense, pressured atmosphere of big law firms. When I was offered a summer 2017 position with Barclay Damon in the Rochester office, I knew it would be a challenge, though I did not hesitate to accept. Arriving my first day, I was prepared to encounter many formalities and a hectic work atmosphere. However, my misconceptions were short lived. While the firm certainly impressed, living up to its reputation for hard work and success, what stood out the most for me was that I had walked into a home. The people, the interactions, the small talk in the Rochester office kitchen, the impromptu lunches, and the laughs and smiles around the office all created a familiar environment.

I quickly felt at home, and every day I woke up excited and looking forward to going to work. Of course, once the assignments began, it was time to roll up my sleeves. Throughout the summer, I had the chance to work in different areas and with different people. I thought every assignment sounded interesting and worth exploring—or at least every assigning attorney had a great sales pitch. I reinforced some of my prior interests, such as labor and employment law, and I also developed new interests like federal appellate work and insurance coverage.

To be honest, there were times when the work seemed endless and the hours long, however, the challenge proved to be worth it. I can honestly say, without hesitation, I learned more during my experience at the Rochester office last summer than during my entire first year of law school. Every attorney or partner who

gave me an assignment had words of wisdom and encouragement. Not only did they show me the path to grow professionally, but some helped me reinforce my own values and taught me invaluable life lessons. By the end of the summer, I had both mentors and friends.



Jonathan Reyes-Colón

My summer experience at Barclay Damon went beyond my expectations. Not only did I experience life in a big firm and develop my legal skills, but I was also blessed with valuable lessons that I trust will play a big part in my future. To the people who were part of my experience, I owe immense gratitude for the time, opportunity, and attention they gave me throughout the summer. As long as Barclay Damon promotes diversity, inclusion, and a familiar, encouraging atmosphere, I believe it will always attract the kind of people I met last summer: a family.

After his summer associateship at Barclay Damon last year, Jonathan returned to the University at Buffalo School of Law, where he and other students traveled to Jonathan's native Puerto Rico to provide relief to those still suffering from Hurricane Maria. Jonathan continues to be involved in this effort.

New Faces Around the Firm

(Through October 22, 2018)

ALBANY

Brian M. Culnan, *Partner*
Dena M. DeFazio, *Law Clerk*
Steven E. Mach, *Associate*

BOSTON

Wayne T. Huston, *Legal Secretary*

BUFFALO

Philip C. Barth IV, *Law Clerk*
Madison A. Schwarzer, *Legal Office Assistant*

NEW YORK CITY

Christopher T. Uba, *Marketing Intern*

ROCHESTER

Lisa C. Arrington, *Partner*
April A. Belardino, *Legal Secretary*
Terrance W. Emmens, *Partner*
Matthew J. Eaves, *Associate*
Kelly R. Gusmano, *Associate*
Jennifer E. Hoose, *Paralegal*
Ann Marie Lindsay, *Paralegal*

Timothy C. Muck, *Partner*
Rachelle H. Nuhfer, *Associate*
Bailey L. Sauers, *Paralegal*
Karen Schaefer, *Partner*
Ann Marie Tripoli, *Paralegal*

SYRACUSE

Anneliese R. Aliasso, *Associate*
Karlene M. Aubertine, *Conflicts Analyst*
Michael J. Balestra, *Partner*
Teresa M. Bennett, *Partner*
Catherine D. Darling, *Conflicts Analyst*
Ellen A. DiSanto, *Legal Secretary*
Tina M. D'Amico, *Legal Secretary*
Jeffrey A. Dove, *Partner*
Philip A. Fallico, *Digital Marketing Coordinator*
Thomas J. Fucillo, *Partner*
Nancy M. Gardner, *Legal Secretary*
Kristen L. Harroun, *Project Coordinator*
Peter Hubbard, *Of Counsel*
Deborah S. Miller, *Legal Secretary*
Kaleigh P. Morrison, *Law Clerk*
Kevin M. Newman, *Partner*

Julie A. Shannon, *Paralegal*
John P. Sidd, *Partner*
Debra C. Sullivan, *Partner*
Melanie K. Tse, *Marketing Intern*
Paul Vellano Jr., *Partner*
Audrey A. Vrooman, *Paralegal*

WATERTOWN

Diane E. Collette, *Paralegal*
Carmen A. Disario, *Legal Secretary*
Mark G. Gebo, *Of Counsel*
Donna R. Jareo, *Legal Secretary*
Joseph W. Russell, *Partner*
Robin D. Russell, *Legal Secretary*
Addison F. Vars III, *Special Counsel*

“Mindful Yogi” Chida Ananda Visits Rochester Office and Pens Guest Essay

Earlier this year, the Rochester office had the good fortune to host monk and author Chida Ananda, also known as the “Mindful Yogi,” during his one-month tour of America. He currently lives in an ashram, or monastery, in Germany, where he studies the *Bhagavad Gita*, a sacred Hindu text, as well as the Vedic (contemplative) traditions of India.

During his presentation “Lessons From the *Bhagavad Gita* for Everyday Life,” Chida Ananda gave a fascinating talk on the history and origins of the *Bhagavad Gita* and discussed timeless mindfulness practices applicable in the modern world. He talked about how people should do their duty

and do it well, whatever it may be—whether working in a law office, doing chores at home, or any other conceivable task. He also explored the idea that, in every situation, people should choose the path that results in the least harm. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of his personal story was how he went from a Cleveland investment banker to a yogi living on a European ashram with his guru. It was by far one of the office’s most well-received and well-attended presentations.

Chida Ananda was kind enough to write for this issue of *Voices of Excellence*.

What Is Yoga?

Yoga was originally created for well-being and to help one transcend the mind. In the West, however, yoga is more commonly associated with the benefits it can provide for the body. Yoga is defined as “*chitta vritti nirodha*,” the act of blocking the mind. It is believed in traditional schools of yoga that the mind is the cause of all negative thoughts. Through the mind, concepts such as anger, jealousy, greed, pride, and an unlimited amount of negative thoughts arise, which are the main causes of one’s unhappiness. By performing yoga, one strives to achieve a still state of mind in which all negative thoughts are transcended. If one can achieve this state, knowledge of the self—also referred to as realization or enlightenment—is achieved. This state is most closely described as a state of inner peace or *shanti*. The ancient yogis knew each person is unique and that each one relates to yoga in a different way. Therefore, great teachers from time immemorial have given a wide range of yoga techniques capable of achieving the end goal desired by the practitioner.

Unfortunately, most of the techniques have been packaged and marketed in a way that is appealing to the Western mindset, predominately focused on the body rather than the mind. These days, one can see all types of yoga, including beer yoga and goat yoga. By commercializing the name “yoga,” the sacredness of yoga and the crucial role it can play in our overall well-being is diminished. The *Bhagavad Gita* helps one to understand the true purpose of yoga and how the techniques can be applied in one’s life. Above all else, as described in the *Bhagavad Gita*, yoga has been given as a practical means of gaining inner peace.



Chida Ananda

Rochester Office Revisits Foodlink Urban Farm



For their 2018 Community Day event, members of the Rochester office visited the Foodlink Lexington Avenue Urban Farm (LAUF) on May 17. The farm had been

vandalized in 2017, and the work done by the Barclay Damon team helped the farm get back on track for this year’s growing season. Over 60 families—mostly refugees from Bhutan, Nepal, Burma, and Somalia—participate in the LAUF community garden. On August 10, members of the Rochester office returned to see the farm’s progress at the height of growing season. Foodlink community program coordinator Nathaniel Mich provided us with a guided tour. Nathaniel explained to the group: “When these families are forced to leave their homes, a lot of times, they can’t take a lot of possessions with them. But they do tell me that they would often sew seeds into the hems of their clothing to carry those with them because it’s really their patrimony. It’s their cultural heritage.” Nearly all the garden beds have grown to over six feet tall, and the fruit trees Barclay Damon planted in May survived through the spring and summer, with an approximate harvest date of 2020!

Nancy Smith Honored at 2018 “D&I State of the Firm”



Regional office director Nancy Smith was recognized for her commitment to diversity and inclusion during the 2018 “D&I State of the Firm” presentation. Nancy was instrumental in making all attorneys and staff feel welcome and supported during the Damon Morey and Hiscock & Barclay combination, and her thoughtfulness of others is appreciated throughout the firm. Congrats, Nancy!

Office Updates

ALBANY OFFICE

Justice for All Campaign Kickoff

Albany office attorneys attended the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York's Justice for All campaign kickoff. Attorney Tom O'Connor serves as co-chair of the campaign and gave the keynote speech, discussing an attorney's obligation to ensure all individuals have equal access to justice.



2018 Diversity 1L Summer Associate Program

This summer, the Albany office was pleased to welcome Albany Law School's Jennifer Cruz, the office's first participant in the Diversity 1L Summer Associate Program. Jennifer did an exceptional job, so much that she was offered a 2L summer associate position for 2019, which she accepted. Our office will be delighted to have Jennifer back next summer, and we look forward to selecting our 2019 1L associate!

Diversity Mentoring Program

This year's Albany office Diversity Mentoring Program kicked off with a welcome reception for the 18 participating students on October 18. A special thanks to attorneys Melissa Bennett, Connie Cahill, David Cost, Brian Culnan, Dena DeFazio, Eric Dyer, Brad Gallagher, Bob Hussar, Naresh Kannan, Wil Lemon, Amanda Mirabito, George Pond, and Bella Satra for volunteering to be mentors! The program was recently highlighted in an issue of the *AlbanyLaw* alumni magazine, featuring quotes from David Cost and Bob Hussar.

Local Sponsorships

The Albany office was a proud sponsor of the Capital District Women's Bar Association Legal Project annual pro bono reception on October 18 and the Pride Center of the Capital Region's 2018 gala on October 19.

BUFFALO OFFICE

Boys & Girls Club School-Supply Drive

With the school year just around the corner, the Buffalo office sponsored a school-supply and backpack drive to benefit the Boys & Girls Club of Buffalo's annual "2 Pack a Backpack" initiative. The supplies collected were distributed to children in need across Western New York. A special thank you to attorney Meghan Dwyer for coordinating the drive!



SYRACUSE OFFICE

Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission of the NYS Courts Award Presentation

As Onondaga County Bar Association Diversity and Inclusion Committee co-chair, attorney Kayla Arias presented the third annual Diversity and Leadership Award to the Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission of the New York State Courts in early summer. Throughout June, the Failla Commission and its legal and court system partners scheduled Pride Month events in Brooklyn, Buffalo, Central Islip, Delhi, Kingston, Queens, Rochester, Syracuse, and White Plains, focusing on topics such as the protections afforded to LGBTQ youth, expressions of pride in the LGBTQ community, developments in LGBTQ employment discrimination, and advances in transgender rights.



International Potluck Lunch

The Syracuse Diversity Leadership Team hosted its second annual International Potluck Lunch featuring foods from around the world. Barclay Damon family members joined each other for a diverse mix of lunch offerings while raising money to support Roots UpLifted, a local not-for-profit co-directed by secretary Darlene Baker that aims to cultivate a better understanding of cultural diversity by exploring the cultural components of the African diaspora, Japan, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Mexico.



Diaper Bank of CNY Jeans Day

The Syracuse office hosted a Jeans Day to benefit the Diaper Bank of Central New York, a local organization that aims to centralize the fundraising and distribution of free diapers to families in need through existing service providers that include local food pantries, child-care centers, social-service agencies, and shelters. The group also strives to raise awareness of low-income families struggling to afford adequate supplies of diapers, a basic need that is not met for all children.