

*This edition of Voices of Excellence examines poverty statistics across the country and in New York State, looking at actions we can all take to better understand the challenges millions face every day.*

## United Nations Issues Scathing Report on US Poverty

The recently issued UN report on US poverty created yet another furor on both the left and right sides of the political aisle. While there are ongoing debates about how to measure poverty and the severity of poverty in the United States, it is undeniable that there is a significant portion of our country's population that struggles to meet the challenges of everyday life. American poverty is an issue that the nation will continue to grapple with for the foreseeable future.

The most recent US Census Bureau report on income and poverty in the United States from 2016 notes that more than 40 million people—nearly 13 percent of the population—live in poverty. Some studies additionally suggest that, at some point during their adult lives, most Americans will spend at least one year below the poverty line.

Earlier this year, the NYS Community Action Association issued its 11th Annual NYS Poverty Report. That report estimates that, in the state alone, nearly 3 million individuals live in poverty—over 900,000 of whom are children under age 18.

If you want to continue the discussion or learn more about issues and challenges surrounding American poverty, consider these options:

- Play the internationally acclaimed online game Spent, hosted by nonprofit Urban Ministries of Durham, and see if you can make it through a month on \$1,000 while facing real-life dilemmas such as, “Do you make a healthy meal or keep the lights on?” and “Hope your sick daughter gets better on her own or risk your job by leaving early to take her to the doctor?” For pro bono attorneys especially, it can be an eye-opening experience.
- Seek to educate yourself with literature like the *New York Times* best-selling *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*, which presents a sociological analysis of poverty in Appalachia.
- Volunteer with friends or colleagues to give back to those living in poverty in your own communities. You'll not only help those in need, but you can get to know individuals and stories you may never have experienced otherwise.

## New York Annual Poverty Report

Source: New York State Community Action Association

### Race & Poverty

White	11.2% (1,387,004)
African American	22.9% (678,013)
Hispanic/Latino	25.4% (910,625)

### Health & Poverty

#### No Health Insurance

Employed	10.7%
Unemployed	23.3%

#### Free/Reduced Lunch Program

 **48%**

#### Educational Attainment

No Degree	High School	Associate	Bachelors or Higher
13.8% (1,838,922)	26.2% (3,488,203)	24.9% (3,307,293)	35.1% (4,668,594)
<b>Total*</b>	<b>Total*</b>	<b>Total*</b>	<b>Total*</b>
29.4% (540,128)	15.1% (525,328)	10.9% (359,830)	5.2% (244,382)
Living in Poverty	Living in Poverty	Living in Poverty	Living in Poverty

\*DUE TO ROUNDING, PERCENTAGES MAY NOT ADD UP PRECISELY TO 100%.



Living Wage for  
1 Adult, 1 Child  
Household  
\$29.71

### Employment & Poverty

Hourly Wage for  
FMR, 2BR Apartment  
\$26.69

Median Income  
\$41,004

Median Income  
w/High School Diploma  
\$30,365

### Gender & Poverty



Median  
Earnings  
\$35,472

Median  
Earnings  
\$24,345

Of Those Families with  
Female Heads of Household  
and Children Present

**37.9%**  
**Live in Poverty**

US Poverty Rate: 15.5% • NYS Poverty Rate: 15.7%

*The chart above presents a statewide summary, looking at correlations between poverty and race, education, employment, gender, and other categories.*

## QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

**The trouble with being poor is that it takes up all your time.**

- Willem de Kooning, Dutch Abstract Expressionist (1904-1997)

## Addition of Menter, Rudin & Trivelpiece Enhances Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

With the addition of the 14 attorneys of Menter, Rudin & Trivelpiece and its paralegals and staff comes their historic commitment to diversity and inclusion that perfectly complements Barclay Damon values.

The Menter team has been actively involved with notable initiatives such as Syracuse Habitat for Humanity and the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, with new Barclay Damon partner Mitch Katz serving on its board of directors. The firm also promoted the New York State Bar Association Commercial and Federal Litigation Section's Smooth Moves program, which offers multiple forums on diversity issues and includes a scholarship for minority law students.

Much like Barclay Damon's Women Forum, Menter offered an interactive chance for professional women to network through its annual women-only wine tour, and the firm supported the New York State Bar Association's Shira A. Scheindlin Award for Excellence in the Courtroom and its corresponding CLE event celebrating the advancement of women leadership in commercial litigation. Fun fact: partner Linda Clark was one of two recipients of the award in 2017.

We are excited to continue to expand our mission to promote diversity and inclusion in and out of the office with the help of our new friends from Menter!

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## 2018 Barclay Damon Community Days



### **SYRACUSE - Wadsworth Park**

Members of the Syracuse office participated in its annual Community Day on April 19 by cleaning up Wadsworth Park. The office partnered with the City of Syracuse as part of its Earth Day efforts. Despite the unseasonably cold weather, Barclay Damon volunteers braved the conditions to pick up leaves, sticks, and other debris, preparing the Little League baseball field for the season opener, and cutting back brush at several rain gardens.



### **ROCHESTER - Foodlink Urban Farm**

Foodlink's Lexington Avenue Urban Farm serves more than 60 families, many of whom are Nepalese, Bhutanese, and Somali refugees. In October 2017, the farm was vandalized. Equipment was stolen and sections of the perimeter fence and the hoop house were damaged. Probably the most disheartening aspect of all of this was the damage done to multiple fruit trees, all of which were a few years old and would have likely borne fruit this year. On May 17, members of the Rochester office volunteered at the farm. Participants built and

secured tomato cages, put down weed barriers, planted and fertilized fruit trees, weeded, and composted—all while avoiding 50,000 bees and one snake. Nathaniel Mich and the other Foodlink staff were very appreciative of the team's efforts, and the Rochester office hopes to schedule a trip back to the farm in a couple of months to see its progress mid-growing season.



### **BUFFALO - Harmac Medical Products' Bailey Green Initiative**

The Bailey Green initiative was started in 2008 by firm client Harmac Medical Products to clean up the long-neglected Bailey Green neighborhood on the city's East Side. On June 15, members of the Buffalo office spent an afternoon cleaning up the Bailey Green neighborhood's vacant lots and sidewalks, sweeping up debris and filling 11 garbage totes with removed trash. The team's work drew praise from community members, including a 40-year Bailey Green resident hindered by arthritis in her cleaning efforts who, when interviewed by the *Buffalo Law Journal*, said, "It's a marvelous thing. I'm so appreciative. I couldn't ask for anything better." The Bailey Green initiative has also yielded an urban farm and several new houses built with the help of partners such as Habitat for Humanity. One of the larger lots in the heart of Bailey Green will be transformed into a park, with a pathway connecting other streets in the neighborhood.

## John Langan Presents 10th Annual Monique Emdin Award

In memory of Monique Emdin, a former Barclay Damon associate who tragically passed away from a rare form of stomach cancer in March 2008, the firm established the Annual Monique E. Emdin Memorial Award at the University at Buffalo School of Law in conjunction with Monique's church, Bethesda World Harvest International. The award is presented annually at the university's Students of Color Dinner to one or more graduating seniors who are members of groups traditionally underrepresented in the legal profession and who demonstrate a commitment

to community service, including significant service in faith-based communities, and who have made a significant impact at the School of Law.



In recognition of the 10th year of Monique's passing, Monique's brothers, her former pastor, and John Langan all spoke about Monique's remarkable personality, achievements, and influence during a life that was tragically cut short. John also spoke about the firm's continuing commitment to diversity and inclusion prior to presenting the award to Donnell Gibson Jr.

### Pro Bono Case Note

Albany office attorney Maggie Rossi recently secured a victory on behalf of a pro bono client facing the loss of her livelihood working as a nurse as a result of being placed on the Medicaid excluded provider list by the NYS Office of the Medicaid Inspector General, essentially prohibiting her from being employed by any entity that accepts a government health care program. This meant that she could not practice in any health care facility.

The client was placed on the list after her license was suspended by the Office of Professional Conduct—a voluntary suspension, as the client chose to seek treatment for drug addiction and entered into an agreement with the Statewide Peer Assistance Program for Nurses. When she approached Barclay Damon for legal aid, she had been sober since June 2016, completed an inpatient substance abuse program, and was currently in an outpatient program.

Despite the OPC reinstating her license in September 2017 and the US Department of Health & Human Services' Office of Inspector General removing her from its own list in January 2018, the OMIG repeatedly denied the request to have the client removed from the state exclusion list, indicating that the client posed a threat to patients. After Maggie's dedicated appeal on behalf of the client, though, the OMIG finally agreed to remove the client's exclusion, opening the door for her to reenter her career.

### Employee Spotlight



We were happy to welcome four new summer associates through our 2018 Diversity 1L Summer Associate Program: Cornell Law School's Sumridhi Kaur, University at Buffalo School of Law's Tevon Carpenter, Albany Law School's Jennifer Cruz, and Syracuse University College of Law's Gaity Hashimi. The students worked in the firm's Rochester, Buffalo, Albany, and Syracuse offices, collaborating with different attorneys across the firm's practice areas to acquire an immersive sense of the firm's services, culture, and business operations.

In addition to gaining insight into legal areas where they might see themselves thriving, participating students had a unique, early opportunity to make beneficial contacts in the local legal community and in other communities across the firm's platform.

We thank them for all their hard work this summer and wish them the best as they begin their second year of study in the fall!

## New Faces Around the Firm

### ALBANY

Jennifer Cruz, *Summer Associate*  
William M. Lemon, *Associate*  
Angela J. Sicker, *Summer Associate*

### BOSTON

Harry T. Daniels, *Of Counsel*

### BUFFALO

Ryan C. Altieri, *Summer Associate*  
Elizabeth J. Betta, *Associate*  
Tevon T. Carpenter, *Summer Associate*  
Sarah J. Minchen, *Billing Coordinator*  
Samantha R. Podlas, *Summer Associate*  
Christopher T. Uba, *Summer Marketing Intern*

### NEW YORK CITY

Sharon L. Brown, *Partner*

### ROCHESTER

Sumridhi Kaur, *Summer Associate*  
Kelsey Till Thompson, *Associate*

### SYRACUSE

Lacey C. Grummons, *Summer Associate*  
Olivia M. Hartmann, *Summer Marketing Intern*  
Gaity Hashimi, *Summer Associate*  
Madeline M. Nice, *Summer Marketing Intern*  
Ivan Zajicek, *Law Clerk*



## Office Updates

### BUFFALO OFFICE

#### ***Food Bank of WNY Drive***

The Buffalo office participated in the University at Buffalo School of Law's Graduates of the Last Decade Group food drive to benefit the Food Bank of WNY. A large bin of food donations and more than \$400 were collected to benefit the Food Bank. The drive also provided an opportunity to honor Food Bank of WNY co-founder and chair emeritus, Dann Stevens, a former Barclay Damon attorney who sadly passed away in 2010.

#### ***Big Brothers Big Sisters Art Show***

In Erie County, Big Brothers Big Sisters has provided one-to-one youth mentoring services for more than 40 years and has impacted the lives of over 10,000 youth. The organization's Art of Friendship project utilizes art as a way to express friendships and connections made between the Big Brother or Sister mentor and their Little Brother or Sister. The Buffalo office exhibited unique melted crayon art pieces in its reception area to support the importance of community youth mentoring—and a special thank you to Buffalo receptionist Amy Wessels for helping coordinate the art show.

#### ***Women's Forum Buffalo Networking Event***

The Barclay Damon Women's Forum held its third annual Buffalo Networking Event on June 26 at the renovated 500 Seneca building in the historic Hydraulics District. Featuring sommelier Melissa Winkler of Winkler & Samuels and the Other Woman Catering, the event offered delicious wine from all-women winemakers and hors d'oeuvres pairings to nearly 80 guests who included judges, a judicial candidate, a NYS Senate candidate, clients, and our attorneys. Attendees were also treated to live piano music.

The venue was specifically chosen for its history as the former headquarters of the FN Burt Company, one of the first manufacturing plants in the country to be led by a woman general manager: Mary Cass. In addition to being a pioneering businesswoman, Cass was one of the founding members of the Zonta Club, a women's advocacy group that began in Buffalo in 1919 and now has more than 30,000 members in 63 countries.

### ROCHESTER OFFICE

#### ***Batavia High School's SOAR Program***

In conjunction with Batavia High School's after-school SOAR Program—run by the brother of Rochester attorney Danielle Mettler-LaFeir—Barclay Damon hosted a group of students in the Rochester office. The students in the program are facing challenges at home and are encouraged, through various activities, to learn valuable life skills that they may not have been exposed to.



The day involved a meet and greet session where attorneys and students discussed the legal profession and shared

views on current events, including the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Florida, and had lunch at Tournedos to practice dining skills and further converse. The students were incredibly engaged and excited, with some commenting that they "couldn't believe the attorneys asked us questions and were interested in what we had to say" and that this experience offered "the longest time I've ever talked to an adult." They noted that their visit made them feel valued and inspired—and couldn't believe that the attorneys cared enough to spend time with them.

#### ***Women's Forum Rochester Networking Event***

The Barclay Damon Women's Forum held its eighth annual Rochester Networking Event on April 26 at the historic American Association of University Women on East Avenue in Rochester. Featuring *Democrat & Chronicle* wine columnist Holly Howell, the event offered a delicious wine tasting paired with hors d'oeuvres from Orange Glory. Attendees were also treated to tours of the building and a women's suffrage scavenger hunt organized by Rochester attorney Stacy Marris.

### SYRACUSE OFFICE

#### ***Diversity 1L Mentoring Program***

In April, the Syracuse office concluded its inaugural Diversity Mentoring Program with the Syracuse University College of Law. Mentors invited their mentees back to Barclay Damon Tower for a reception to conclude the semester. Many relationships were made through this partnership, and both the law school and Barclay Damon are excited to launch a year-long program in August.

#### ***OCBA D&I Committee's Welcome to Syracuse Event***

Barclay Damon co-sponsored the Onondaga County Bar Association Diversity & Inclusion Committee's Welcome to Syracuse event on June 14. This annual event welcomed Syracuse summer interns, summer associates, and new lawyers for an evening of networking and featured an "Advances in Transgender Rights: Employment, Education, and Health" CLE.

#### ***OCBA Law Day Career Fair***

On May 3, Syracuse attorney Renato Smith participated in the Onondaga County Bar Association's Law Day Career Fair, meeting with high school students and teachers to discuss the process of becoming an attorney, the various types of law, and different legal career paths.



#### ***Building Men Program Jeans Day***

The Syracuse office hosted a Jeans Day to benefit the Building Men Program, a local initiative supporting young men in their journey toward becoming men of character by helping them develop their purpose and passion, instilling integrity in their leadership, and providing them with opportunities to build healthy relationships with others. Participants were asked to donate \$5 or a tie, as the program organizers want to provide a new tie for every graduate of the Building Men Summer Institute.