

Pro Bono News

SPRING 2018

Pro Bono Challenge

The firm encourages every attorney to achieve the aspiration set forth in New York Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1 of providing at least 50 hours per year of pro bono legal services to poor persons. The Pro Bono Challenge will reward lawyers who meet thresholds of hours of pro bono legal services in a given calendar year with Kramer Levin-branded prizes at each level to be awarded at the annual Marvin Frankel Pro Bono Awards Ceremony in March. The 2018 levels include:

20 hours: Pro Bono Counsel 50 hours: Pro Bono Advocate 100 hours: Pro Bono Champion

Pro Bono Highlights

KL Assists Client in Application for U.S. Citizenship



Business Immigration special counsel **Allison Gray** helped her long-standing pro bono client from Chad, Mr. K., with his naturalization application, and he was sworn in as a U.S. citizen in January 2018. Allison first

represented Mr. K. in 2008 in his successful political asylum application.

Since obtaining asylum, Mr. K. moved from New York to Indiana, got married, had three children and works as a machine operator. He is a true success story.



KL Wins Argument on Behalf of the Innocence Project



Kramer Levin, representing the Innocence Project Inc., as amicus curiae in the New York Court of Appeals, filed a brief arguing that the trial court erred when it refused the defendant's request for a cross-racial identification instruction. The brief discussed extensive scientific research showing that people are better able to recall the face of a person of the same race than that of someone of another race. The Court of Appeals held that in criminal cases courts

must, upon request, instruct jurors that they may consider the unreliability of a cross-racial eyewitness identification. The Kramer Levin team consisted of Litigation partner **David Frankel** and associates **Jennifer Klein**, **Michelle Ben-David** and **Aaron Webman**.

KL Obtains Restraining Order and Child Support for Domestic Violence Victim



Kramer Levin obtained a restraining order and child support for a victim of domestic violence who was seeking to leave a verbally and physically

abusive relationship with the father of her 11-month-old child. Our client obtained a three-year restraining order and significant monthly child support. The Kramer Levin team included Intellectual Property associate **Hien Lien**, and Intellectual Property partner **Lisa Kobialka** supervised the case.

KL Settles Section 1983 Civil Rights Action for Pro Bono Client



This past June, Litigation associate **Michael Calb** and former associate Kurt Denk successfully settled a Section 1983 civil rights action on behalf of a former juvenile inmate at Rikers

Island who was brutally attacked and denied medical attention by corrections officers. Mr. Calb and former associate Jade Burns conducted full document discovery and deposed the officers involved before successfully moving to amend the complaint. After that motion was granted, Mr. Calb and Mr. Denk settled with the defendants for a substantial sum.

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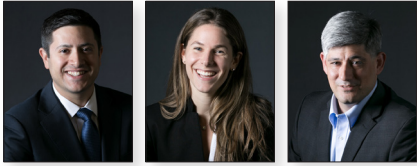
Jacqueline Ryu
Robert Schmidt

Norman Simon
Gary Tarnoff

Jeff Trachtman
Reyhan Watson

Pro Bono Highlights

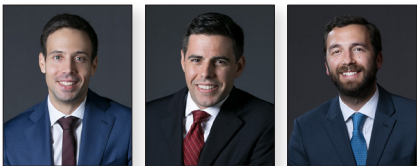
KL Obtains Asylum for Pro Bono Client



Kramer Levin obtained asylum for a client from Honduras who feared persecution because he is a gay man. The case was especially

challenging because our client applied for asylum after being in the United States for nearly 10 years, well past the one-year deadline for asylum. The Kramer Levin team was able to convince the asylum officer that our client's recent HIV diagnosis constituted changed life circumstances and increased the danger of persecution if he were to return to Honduras, thus qualifying him for a waiver of the one-year filing deadline. The Kramer Levin team included Litigation associates **Max Goldman** and **Irene Weintraub**, and Intellectual Property partner **Aaron Frankel** supervised the case.

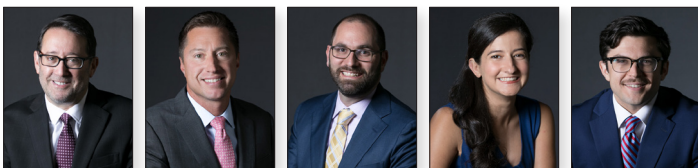
KL Obtains Asylum for Pro Bono Client From Russia



Kramer Levin obtained asylum for a client from Russia who feared persecution because he is a gay man. The Kramer Levin

team presented a compelling case that Russian police subject homosexuals to extrajudicial violence and unlawful arrest. The Kramer Levin team included Corporate associate **Matthis Quin**, Real Estate associate **Randall Allen**, and Bankruptcy and Restructuring associate **Andrew Pollack**. Intellectual Property partner **Aaron Frankel** supervised the case.

KL Files Supreme Court Amicus Brief Urging Court to Grant Review of Standing Issue That Overturned Decision Striking Down Mississippi's Sweeping Anti-LGBT Law



Kramer Levin has filed an amicus brief urging the U.S. Supreme Court to grant certiorari to review a Fifth Circuit ruling on standing that had the effect of letting Mississippi's sweeping anti-LGBT law go into effect last month. HB 1523 protects specifically enumerated religious beliefs above all others — namely, that marriage can only be between a man and a woman, that sexual relations are properly confined to such a marriage, and that sex is an innate characteristic assigned at birth and cannot change — and allows public officials, businesses, doctors and others to invoke the enumerated beliefs as justification for refusing treatment and service to LGBT persons. The Kramer Levin team that drafted the brief includes Litigation partners **Jeffrey Trachtman** and **Norman Simon**, special counsel **Jason Moff**,

associates **Evie Spanos**, **Timur Tusray** and former associate **Kurt Denk**.

KL Files Supreme Court Amicus Brief on Behalf of Mainstream Religious Groups Opposing Colorado Bakery That Refused to Sell Wedding Cake to Same-Sex Couple

Kramer Levin has filed an amicus brief on behalf of numerous major religious organizations and nearly 1,300 individual faith leaders — including the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association, among others — in the landmark case now pending before the U.S. Supreme Court addressing the claimed right of a Colorado baker to refuse to sell a wedding cake to a same-sex couple otherwise protected by a state antidiscrimination law. The Kramer Levin team that drafted the brief includes Litigation partners **Jeffrey Trachtman** and **Norman Simon**, special counsel **Jason Moff**, associates **Evie Spanos**, **Timur Tusray** and former associate **Kurt Denk**.

KL Assists Children in Foster Care in Reuniting With Their Parents



Kramer Levin worked with the Legal Aid Society to reunify a family of five that had been separated due to a burdensome overnight visitation requirement imposed by the New York Administration for Children's Services. Before the Administration would release the children into their parents' custody, it required a weekend overnight visitation that could not take place in the shared room the parents rented. Because the family was not eligible for permanent housing assistance without custody of the children and because the family could not afford a suitable location for an overnight visit, the ACS requirement effectively prevented the family from reunifying after a seven-year effort.

Equal Justice Works Fellow **Loretta Johnson** (sponsored by Kramer Levin) and Litigation associate **Harold Robinson** filed an Order to Show Cause requesting that ACS be ordered to pay the cost of an overnight hotel or otherwise be obligated to find a suitable arrangement.

KL Obtains Asylum for Transgender Client



Kramer Levin obtained asylum for a client from Russia who feared persecution because he is a transgender man. In 2013, Russia codified a law prohibiting the promotion of "nontraditional" relationships, which *The New York Times* reported gives broad latitude to Russian police in the ongoing persecution of homosexuals. The Kramer Levin team, Intellectual Property associate **Austin Manes** and supervising partner **Aaron Frankel**, successfully demonstrated to the asylum officer that our client and his wife have a well-founded fear that the Russian government would persecute them if they returned to Russia.

Kramer Levin Congratulates the 4th Annual Marvin Frankel Pro Bono Award Winners and Thanks Pro Bono Challenge Participants

Kramer Levin congratulates the winners of its 4th Annual Marvin Frankel Award for Outstanding Pro Bono Contributions:

Litigation associate **Samuel B. Shepson** for obtaining asylum for a woman from Honduras who was persecuted for nearly a decade by her domestic partner. Sam was assisted by Anya Cwiecek, former head paralegal of the firm’s asylum program, and by legal assistant Carolina Correa, who provided valuable translations.

“Receiving this award meant a lot to me because so many people at our firm do challenging pro bono work that helps the people who need it most. To be recognized among such a committed, talented group of lawyers was truly an honor.”

— *Samuel Shepson*

The **Bail Project Team** for their work with Brooklyn Defender Services in challenging excessive money bail set in felony cases in Brooklyn criminal court. Attorneys who are part of the Bail Project represent indigent defendants in challenging onerous bail determinations at both the trial and appellate levels and at every stage of the pre-trial criminal process, from first appearance through incarceration. The Kramer Levin team consists of Litigation partner **Darren LaVerne**, associates **Daniel Ketani**, **Jennifer Klein**, **Alejandro Ortega** and **Reyhan Watson**, and paralegal Hannah Schlaferman.

Former Litigation associate **Elliot Smith** for securing a victory on behalf of The Organization for the Resolution of Agunot (ORA) when the Superior Court of New Jersey granted summary judgment dismissing all claims filed against ORA by David Kestler, who had refused to give his ex-wife a “get.” ORA is a not-for-profit organization devoted to eliminating get-refusal by assisting agunot in obtaining a get, a bill of Jewish divorce necessary to terminate a marriage in accordance with Jewish law. In 2015, plaintiff David Kestler filed suit against ORA, alleging defamation and other claims arising from ORA’s publicity for a peaceful rally protesting Mr. Kestler’s get-refusal. The Superior Court granted summary judgment in favor of ORA on all claims. Elliot was supervised by Litigation partner **Jonathan Wagner**.

The firm donated \$5,000 on behalf of Sam to Human Rights First, \$5,000 on behalf of the Bail Project Team to Brooklyn Defender Services and \$5,000 on behalf of Elliot to the City Bar Justice Center.



Marvin Frankel Pro Bono Award winner Sam Shepson and Gina DeChiaro from Lawyers Alliance (formerly Human Rights First).

Congratulations to our Bail Project Team, Marvin Frankel Pro Bono Award winners for their work with Brooklyn Defender Services challenging excessive money bail set in felony cases in criminal court.



Congratulations to former associate Elliot Smith on his Marvin Frankel Pro Bono Award!

Former associate Kurt Denk (left), from City Bar Justice Center, and Kramer Levin partner Jonathan Wagner. Kramer Levin donated \$5,000 to the City Bar Justice Center on behalf of former Litigation associate Elliot Smith and his pro bono efforts.



Pro Bono Challenge Winners

100+ Hours — Pro Bono Champion

Tai Aliya	John Dillon	Tobias Jacoby	Gary Naftalis	Daniel Schumeister
Randall Allen	Jeff Dunlap	Thomas Janover	Sheri Nentin Graniero	Samuel Shepson
Benjamin Arrow	Rita Celebrezze	Alana Katz	Max Nowak	Joseph Shifer
Christopher Auguste	D'Souza	Elena Keil	Matthew Olinzock	Shaked Sivan
Mark Baghdassarian	Aaron Frankel	Karen Kennedy	Alejandro Ortega	Elliot Smith
Katrina Baker	David Frankel	Mariya Khvatskaya	Anna Ostrom	Evie Spanos
Priya Baranpuria	Leah Friedman	Jennifer Klein	Joel Pietrzak	Marsha Sukach
Michelle Ben-David	Elise Funke	Sam Koch	Jeffrey Price	Jeffrey Trachtman
Barry Berke	Jasmine Li Godyn	Friedrich Laub	Daniel Rabinowitz	Agnes Trenche
Katya Chernyak	Max Goldman	Sara Lefkovitz	Joshua Rittenberg	Timur Tusray
Dayna Chikamoto	Steven Goldman	Timothea Letson	Harold Robinson	Elise Wagner
Marcus Colucci	Jane Gross	Cristina Martinez	Eric Rosoff	Reyhan Watson
Christopher Davis	Sarah Hanson	John McNulty	Ted Ruthizer	Aaron Webman
Jeffrey Davis	Sarah Heim	Laura Milano	Jacqueline Ryu	Irene Weintraub
Michael Dell	Catherine Hoge	Harry Morgenthau	Anna Schoenfelder	Christine Willgoos
Kurt Denk				

50+ Hours — Pro Bono Advocate

Peter Abruzzese	Samantha Ettari	Daniel Ketani	Izabel McDonald	Howard Rothman
Arthur Aufses III	Alan Friedman	Audrey Kim	Zachary Naidich	Seth Schinfeld
Jeffrey Braun	Matthew Hacker	Daniel King	Jason Norinsky	Hanna Seifert
Douglas Buckley	Natan Hamerman	Erica Klein	Stephanie Nguyen	Michael Sillerman
Yuridia Caire	Shannon Hedvat	Leslie Kroeger	Steve Ni	Patrick Sullivan
Michael Calb	Inge Hindriks	Ken Kwan	Seth Niedermayer	Deborah Taeid
Sean Coffey	Nobumasa Hiroi	Daniel Lennard	Claudia Pak	Alex Traum
Eric Daniel	Geoffrey Hu	Jenny Leon	Tuvia Peretz	Jeff Tsai
Lydia Deutsch	Sara Hung	Hien Lien	Philip Powers	Jonathan Wagner
Rama Douglas	William Johnson	Austin Manes	Matthis Quin	Arielle Warshall Katz
Jacqueline Edwards	Samantha Kagan	Michael Mayerfeld	Nolan Robinson	Jessica Weigel

20+ Hours — Pro Bono Counsel

Elisabeth Avallone	Avigail Goldglancz	Erin Klewin	Jay Neveloff	Nathan Schwartzberg
Philip Bentley	Noah Hertz-Bunzl	Lisa Kobialka	John Novogrod	Cynthia Lovinger
Daksha Bhatia	Dennis Heyman	Ted Lamm	Michael Oberman	Siderman
Avram Cahn	Christopher Hopkins	Darren LaVerne	Chris Palladino	Daniel Stewart
Valerie Campbell	Nathan Hyman	Gilbert Liu	Ross Peyser	Jeffrey Taub
Kenneth Chin	Susan Jacquemot	Melissa Milich	Kelly Porcelli	Eugene Travers
Boaz Cohen	Erin Jones	Jason Moff	Julia Quigley	Megan Wasson
Brian Crosby	Shivani Kapur	Richard Moss	Shahriar Raafi	Benu Wells
Ryan Gander	Marcie Kesner			

Honors and Awards

2018

NYSBA President's Pro Bono Service Award

Large Law Firm Category for firm's involvement in the Bail Project

2018

Vault Law Firm Associates Survey

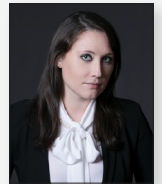
Top 5 Best Law Firm for Pro Bono;
Top 20 Best Law Firm to Work For;
Top 20 Firm for LGBT Diversity

2014-2017

Legal Services NYC

Received Pro Bono Leadership Award

Congratulations and Welcome to the New Pro Bono Committee Members!



Elena Otero Keil
Corporate Associate



Laurence Pettit
Securitization Partner



Alejandro Ortega
Litigation Associate



Reyhan Watson
Litigation Associate

If you have a matter, award or honor suitable for inclusion in the next Pro Bono News, please contact Jamie Porco in the Professional Development Department at ext. 7529.