

Weil

Our Finest Hours

Pro Bono 2013



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Weil's Pro Bono Report 2013

Great values are the bedrock of a great law firm.

Weil's commitment to pro bono work is deeply ingrained in our culture. We believe that it is our obligation to volunteer our skills to those who would otherwise face severe challenges as victims of injustice or abuse without legal representation. As economic difficulties exacerbate the problem of unequal access to quality legal representation, the need is as great as ever, and we continue to respond to it. Along with helping individual clients, Weil considers it essential to assist groups that work on behalf of the public to address issues of economic and social justice.

The importance Weil places on providing these services to the community is demonstrated by our goal of having all lawyers at the Firm perform 50 hours of pro bono work each year. Toward that end, every partner is expected to work on a pro bono matter every year, and every new attorney – including lateral partners – is required to take on a pro bono matter. During the past decade, Weil has performed more than 800,000 hours of pro bono work and has had a meaningful effect on thousands of lives.

We are privileged to have institutional clients that share our commitment and actively work with us on initiatives in a number of areas, including criminal justice reform, human rights, community and economic development, children's welfare, civil and constitutional rights, health and environmental issues, and asylum and immigration. This past year, our combined efforts – and the skill, dedication, energy, and empathy of Weil attorneys – again led to outcomes that transformed lives. These included winning asylum for those persecuted in their home countries; protecting the rights of thousands of tenants on the brink of homelessness; pressing for the release of those wrongfully convicted of crimes; protecting the right to vote from unwarranted state interference; and supporting the search for solutions to the world's ecological problems. It is for good reason that we call the time we spend on pro bono work "our finest hours." We invite you to explore a sampling of our work to discover why we take such pride in these accomplishments.



Barry M. Wolf
Executive Partner



Steven Alan Reiss
Chair, Pro Bono Committee



Asylum

“Our contest is not only whether we ourselves shall be free, but whether there shall be left to mankind an asylum on earth for civil and religious liberty.”

— *Samuel Adams*

To safeguard the rights of those facing political and cultural persecution in their homeland, Weil has long taken on a sizable number of asylum matters. They are referred through Human Rights First, Catholic Charities’ Cabrini Center, Kids in Need of Defense, Tahirih Justice Center, and other national and local legal service organizations that, along with Weil, recognize the desperate, often life-threatening circumstances from which our clients seek refuge.

El Salvador

In one of our longest-running pro bono matters, Weil won asylum for a client from El Salvador, bringing a decade-long representation to a notably successful conclusion. Our client came to the US from El Salvador when he was just 16, fleeing abuse by a notorious gang. During asylum hearings, Weil presented evidence that he had endured extortion, violence, and death threats following his bold defiance of the gang, which he refused to join, and demonstrated why returning would expose him to further persecution. The court found the evidence credible but denied asylum on the ground that his fear of persecution did not fall within any category protected under immigration law. After the Board of Immigration Appeals affirmed that decision and we appealed in federal court, the Office of Immigration Litigation consented to remand of the case in light of new precedent and the need to consider whether the proper “mixed-motive” analysis had been conducted. The Weil team demonstrated that the proper mixed-motive analysis and intervening precedent made asylum appropriate. The immigration judge reversed his prior decision and granted asylum, finding that our client’s opposition to gang membership, which had caused his well-founded fear of persecution, was based on religious beliefs, a protected asylum category.

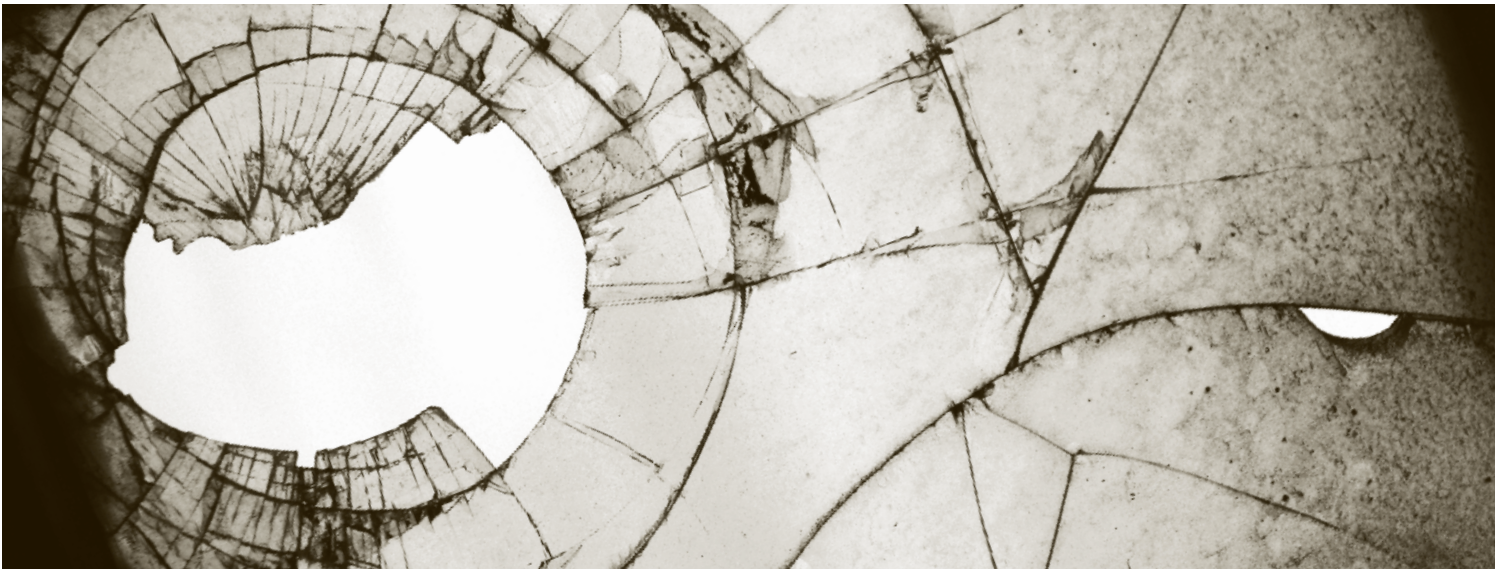
Iraq

Through a referral by the List Project, which helps Iraqis endangered by their work with the US to emigrate from Iraq and relocate to the United States, Weil succeeded in securing resettlement of the family of an Iraqi translator who had worked with Allied Forces for several years. The translator had already resettled in the US, but he feared for the safety of family members back in Iraq, who faced retaliation for the work he had done. Thanks to efforts by the Weil team, the entire family has arrived safely and been reunited with him in the US.

- In a matter referred to us by Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Weil was instrumental in gaining administrative closure for a Honduran citizen who, at age 15, fled his home country out of fear for his life and came to the US. He had received death threats from a violent gang responsible for a large number of murders, and he felt that the Honduran government was unable or unwilling to protect him from persecution. A team of Weil attorneys has worked with him since 2010, when he was in removal proceedings due to an unrelated arrest for an alleged misdemeanor. The team prepared his application for asylum, withholding of removal, and relief pursuant to the convention against torture. The team also filed a separate alternative motion seeking to have the case administratively closed, so as to prevent our client's deportation while at the same time preserving his asylum application for possible adjudication at a later date, if necessary. Following a hearing, the Immigration Court granted the motion and administratively closed the case. In addition, pursuant to the new Obama Administration program, we submitted an application for deferred action for childhood arrivals, which is pending. We have also recently helped our client renew his work authorization and enroll in English classes.

Honduras

- A 14-year-old boy from Honduras came to the US when he was 5 and was then abandoned by his parents and left to the system. After Catholic Charities referred the matter to us, attorneys in Weil's Houston office represented him in seeking Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. After several hearings in both state court and immigration court, our client received permanent legal status. He is now finishing high school in Virginia and intends to pursue a career in law enforcement following graduation.



- For more than two years, Weil attorneys in our Houston office have worked tirelessly to ensure that a mother and daughter, both victims of severe domestic violence, would be able to remain safely in the US and receive legal status. In 2010, the 14-year-old daughter fled from physical and sexual abuse at the hands of family members in Honduras and was reunited with her mother in the US. Weil attorneys, working closely with the Tahirih Justice Center, ensured that the daughter was able to obtain the legal assistance, counseling, medical attention, and education she needed. In 2012, the government granted the daughter Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and, subsequently, permanent legal resident status. At the same time, Weil attorneys, in partnership with Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Greater Houston, represented the mother in her petition for a U visa. In 2013, the government granted the mother's petition, providing her with temporary legal resident status with the option of permanent status after a short waiting period.

Asylum

Mali

- Attorneys from Weil's Houston office represented a 28-year-old woman from Mali who had been the victim of female genital mutilation and brutal beatings by her stepfather, brother, and stepmother before coming to the United States on a student visa. She chose to convert from Islam to Christianity in the US. In response, her family cut off her financial support and arranged a forced marriage to a devout Muslim who was already married with children and many decades older than she was. Scared, desperate, and destitute, she sought asylum and was then referred to Weil by the Tahirih Justice Center. As a victim of past persecution with the well-founded fear of future persecution, she was granted asylum and will be eligible for permanent residency in a year.



Mexico

- After coming to the US from Mexico without documentation and with two young children, our client settled down and ultimately married her second husband, with whom she had two more children. Her new husband was abusive, however, and particularly so with her older daughter from the prior marriage. Our client was terrified that if she reported her husband to the authorities, she and her two oldest children would be deported and her two youngest children would end up in the care of their abusive father. She also feared that if her abusive husband were jailed, she would be unable to provide for her children, because she lacked papers required for employment. Our client overcame her fear for the sake of her children, and she and her oldest daughter assisted in the arrest and prosecution of her abusive husband. She was then referred to Weil by Catholic Charities, and with the help of attorneys from our Houston office, she and her two oldest children received U visas and work authorization permits in 2012. Our client is now able to work and attend school, while volunteering at her children's schools and her church.



- In a particularly difficult case involving the one-year bar to filing asylum claims, a Weil team secured asylum for a 23-year-old college student, referred to us by The Door, who faced female circumcision and forced marriage to an older, polygamous, and likely abusive man if she returned to Mali. Raised in the US by her parents, our client discovered when a teenager that she did not have legal immigration status and that female circumcision was practiced in Mali. Her mother assured her that she would not be subjected to the practice but died shortly before our client's high school graduation. After her mother's death, relatives in Mali arranged for her to be married and circumcised and insisted that she return to Mali to "become a woman" – prompting her to file for asylum. In the asylum proceeding, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) attorney assigned to the case argued that our client's claim should be barred by the one-year filing deadline in the Immigration and Nationality Act. Weil argued that because of our client's changed circumstances – namely her mother's death and the arrangement of a forced marriage in Mali less than two months before she submitted her application – the one-year bar should not apply. Following oral argument and the submission of exhibits and testimony, including from an expert on female circumcision practices in Africa, the DHS attorney chose not to oppose the entry of an order granting asylum, which was then issued by the judge.

- A 15-year-old girl from Mexico came to the United States following the death of her father, whom she believed was killed by members of a drug gang. Her mother abandoned her when she was just a year old, and her father had been the only caregiver she had ever known. She feared attack from the gang she thought responsible for killing her father and fled to the US. Alone and indigent, our client ultimately took shelter with Catholic Charities, which led to her referral to Weil for assistance in seeking US citizenship. Our client's case presented certain procedural challenges, including the need to terminate her mother's parental rights even though her mother's whereabouts were unknown. Attorneys from Weil's Houston office developed the legal theories to provide our client with a path to citizenship. She now resides with her aunt and uncle in South Texas and, with help from attorneys in that area, is continuing to seek citizenship.



Children

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

— *Nelson Mandela*

Helping children achieve stability and safety in their lives is one of the most rewarding kinds of pro bono work we do. Weil assists organizations that advocate for children in adoption and custody disputes, protect them from abuse and neglect, lift their spirits in the face of health crises, and in so many ways enable them to realize their full human potential.

Achieving an Adoption — and a Happy Ending

As part of our ongoing Adoption Project with MFY Legal Services, Weil successfully facilitated the adoption of a boy, now 13, whose mother died in a car accident when he was 3. The boy’s father later met a woman who became a part of the family and a critical parental figure. When the father died in 2009, the woman became the boy’s legal guardian for two years but wanted to adopt the boy to reassure him that she would remain a part of his life forever.

Weil was engaged to help with the adoption petition, and during its representation, two of the boy’s maternal relatives filed petitions seeking to terminate the guardianship. Although these matters were outside the scope of our engagement, Weil agreed to represent the guardian in her defense of the two petitions. After months and several conferences before the Bronx County Family Court, our team successfully negotiated a consensual resolution of one petition and obtained a dismissal of the other. We then pushed for finalization of the adoption petition, which was approved by the court in August 2012. The boy declared the day of his adoption the “happiest” of his life.

Defending a Father’s Visitation Rights

In a case referred by MFY Legal Services, Weil represented the father of a 7-year-old boy whose mother sought a court order allowing her to relocate with the boy from New York to Florida, where she had family. The move would have ended the father-son relationship as neither parent had the means to travel between Florida and New York, and the mother, who had legal custody of the boy, had a history of impeding the father’s visitation. The attorney for the child supported the mother’s position, arguing that relocation was in the boy’s best interest. The court conducted a weeklong trial that was handled by two Weil associates. Following the trial, the court not only denied the mother’s relocation petition, finding that it was in the boy’s best interests to remain in New York, but also granted the father significantly greater visitation rights and indicated a willingness to consider awarding custody to the father should the mother continue to thwart his visitation with his son.



Helping Children Heal Through Laughter

Weil's Budapest office assisted the Smiling Hospital, a Hungarian organization that believes healing sick children involves more than just medicine, with the process of establishing the Smiling Hospital International Foundation, through which its activities will be extended to other countries. We prepared all required documents and filed the request for registration, which the court has now granted. The Smiling Hospital institutes programs in hospitals involving musicians, magicians, and other artists with the aim of lifting children's spirits. These programs will also be expanded to help those with mental and physical disabilities, as well as the elderly. Based in Hungary, the Smiling Hospital International Foundation will be active in seven additional countries.

Assisting Young Immigrants in Pursuing Their Dream

Weil's offices in New York and Texas participated in programs that help young immigrants with their Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applications. Students and graduates who receive status pursuant to DACA can for a certain period of time work and study legally in the United States, apply for certain forms of college financial aid, and remain eligible for relief under any future immigration reforms. In New York, Weil co-hosted two clinics for volunteer attorneys with Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) in support of the VOLS Dream Not Deferred Project, and at the clinics, attorneys from Weil and other New York law firms helped immigrant high school students and recent graduates complete their DACA applications. Given the huge immigrant population in Texas, Weil's Texas offices, working closely with the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP), have been at the forefront of providing training, plus organizing and staffing clinics, throughout Texas to assist immigrants with DACA applications. In fact, TCRP recently recognized Weil as one of the firms in Texas contributing substantially to their success in 2012.

Shepherding Children Through a Bitter Custody Battle

A long-standing family matter referred to Weil by the Children's Law Center reached a milestone when the Family Court of the DC Superior Court entered a final custody order in favor of the father that will help ensure stability for the two children. Weil played an extraordinary role in this matter: various associates served as guardians *ad litem* since 2006, when the father commenced the case to obtain custody of his two minor children (now aged 8 and 10) and remove them from the unstable living conditions they endured in their mother's home. The guardians *ad litem* fully supported the order, which awards the father primary physical and legal custody of the children, with the mother granted visitation on alternating holidays and weekends.

Over the course of seven years, the guardians *ad litem* from Weil participated in dozens of court hearings, visits with the children, and many heated disputes between the parents, which often necessitated emergency hearings. At the court's request the guardians *ad litem* remained in place for a few months after the order was entered, given the likelihood that there would be further disagreements between the parents. After two additional hearings, the court concluded that the custodial situation was appropriate and terminated the guardians *ad litem*'s appointment in the expectation that the children will now experience a more stable family life without ongoing court intervention.



Civil & Constitutional Rights

“Freedom and justice cannot be parceled out in pieces to suit political convenience. I don’t believe you can stand for freedom for one group of people and deny it to others.”

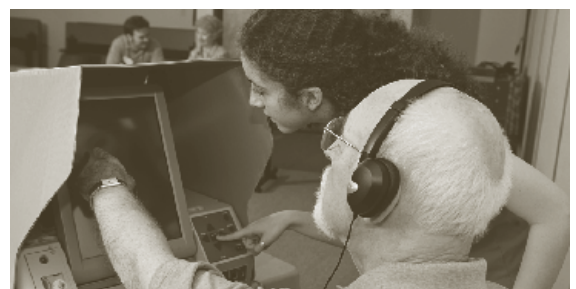
— Coretta Scott King

Challenges to civil and voting rights threaten our democratic existence and the promise of liberty to all. Weil has long offered legal assistance across a broad spectrum of civil and constitutional rights matters, including the voting rights abuses that imperil our political equality.

Safeguarding the Right to Vote in Florida

In a significant voting rights litigation, Weil’s Miami office, along with attorneys from the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the American Civil Liberties Union, helped stop the Florida Secretary of State from improperly purging alleged non-citizens from the state’s voting rolls. Weil and the two civil liberties groups filed a lawsuit on behalf of Mi Familia Vota Education Fund and two registered Florida voters in June 2012 claiming that the Secretary’s new voter purge program violated Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. In September 2012, less than two months before the general election, a Florida federal court ruled in favor of Weil’s clients by denying the Secretary’s motion to dismiss the plaintiffs’ amended complaint, thereby securing a major victory for the voters of Florida.

As a result of the litigation, Florida’s Secretary of State and Division of Elections changed their voter purge program to address the plaintiffs’ concern that the purge procedures erroneously targeted a disproportionate share of racial and language minorities. The court’s denial of the motion to dismiss, and subsequent motion to stay, also enabled the team to conduct discovery regarding these changes, which led the Secretary of State to extend his office’s decision not to apply its prior voter purge procedures during the 2012 election process.





Mobilizing for Fair Elections

Election Protection is a nonpartisan coalition formed to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to exercise their right to vote. Attorneys in several of Weil's US offices volunteered as part of Election Protection 2012. These volunteers served as legal field monitors, assisting voters at voting locations; staffed call centers, where they answered questions from voters and legal field monitors around the country; and manned command centers, where they assisted regional support efforts. Prior to the election, Weil's Houston office conducted due diligence to develop a deployment plan for legal field monitors to visit a substantial portion of the polls in Harris County. On Election Day, Weil's Houston office served as the primary command center for the State of Texas, managing hundreds of volunteers, fielding calls, and responding to issues from 6 a.m. through 8 p.m. Following the election, Weil mobilized a core group of volunteers in Houston to capitalize on the lessons learned from 2012 by immediately turning to the work of improving resources and procedures for future election cycles.



Defending Judicial Independence in Dallas

Weil successfully represented a Dallas Municipal Court judge in litigation provoked by the efforts of the City of Dallas to remove her from office because of her candidacy for a higher judicial position. The City Charter purports to require appointed city officers to forfeit their appointive positions if they run for elective office. The City Council's attempt to treat the Municipal Court as part of city government rather than of the state judiciary raised serious issues of judicial independence. Weil obtained a temporary injunction against removal, and successfully defended it in the Court of Appeals and the Texas Supreme Court against the City's claim of sovereign immunity.

Community and Economic Development

“We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community.”

— Cesar Chavez

Weil assists the homeless, the near-homeless, the elderly poor, and other vulnerable citizens in our communities to help prevent the suffering caused by injustice and isolation. Our attorneys also work with organizations committed to empowering small businesses and revitalizing neighborhoods.

For many years Weil has maintained a strong partnership with **The Legal Aid Society** to protect the rights of New York’s most economically vulnerable citizens. Weil is especially proud of our partnership with Legal Aid to defend low-income tenants at risk of homelessness. Below is a sample of Weil Legal Aid matters in which we succeeded in completely reversing or substantially mitigating the unfair actions taken against our clients.

Ensuring a Fair Shot at Housing Aid

Weil joined The Legal Aid Society in filing a class action against city and state agencies on behalf of all New York City residents who sought to apply for assistance under the Family Eviction Prevention Supplement program (FEPS) but who were unable to do so because of a reduction in the availability of services. The complaint seeks relief designed to increase access to the FEPS application system. FEPS provides essential rental subsidies to New York City families facing imminent eviction and families who are homeless. In early 2012, funding for the organizations authorized to process FEPS applications was cut by approximately 33 percent. Around this same time, the demand for FEPS increased because the City terminated the Advantage program, which paid similar rental subsidies. The combination of increased demand and greatly reduced funding led to extreme delays in the FEPS application process, leaving many of the eligible families unable to secure appointments to apply for FEPS assistance even as they faced homelessness. The litigation is still pending, but since July 2012, when the case was filed, the government agencies have taken significant steps to address these problems, including providing additional funding to hire more workers to process FEPS applications, thus reducing or eliminating delays faced by FEPS applicants.



Advocating for the Formerly Homeless

Weil was co-counsel with The Legal Aid Society in bringing a class action to enjoin New York City from cutting off rent subsidy payments that the City had guaranteed to 16,000 formerly homeless families and individuals, a total of approximately 37,000 people. The plaintiffs were participants in the City's Advantage program, which provided rent subsidies directly to participants' landlords for up to two years to assist with the transition from homelessness to permanent housing. In 2011, after losing New York State funding for the program, the City announced its plan to terminate the Advantage program within a month, and the plaintiffs were faced with imminent eviction from their rented apartments. Weil assisted The Legal Aid Society throughout the Advantage matter, successfully obtaining a temporary restraining order against the City and an appellate injunction, and pursuing appeals at each juncture, including a seven-day trial in New York Supreme Court. The court ultimately decided for the City, but because of the advocacy of Weil and The Legal Aid Society, the Advantage tenants continued to receive subsidies from April 2011 through February 2012 while the matter was pending, totaling in excess of \$115 million. In recognition of our contributions to the case, the Weil team received The Legal Aid Society's 2011 and 2012 Pro Bono Publico Awards and the New York State Bar Association's 2012 President's Pro Bono Service Award.

Stopping an Eviction Based on False Charges

Weil's Housing Team, along with The Legal Aid Society, represented a mother and daughter threatened by NYCHA with eviction from their public housing for "non-desirability." The action against them was based on their arrests in late 2011 in connection with a domestic disturbance resulting in injuries to another family member. Our clients maintained that the allegations against them were false, and the court granted the district attorney's motion to dismiss the charges. The NYCHA attorney handling the cases was unaware of the subsequent dismissal of the criminal charges, and we presented him with copies of the certificates of disposition issued by the court. After some delay, the NYCHA attorney ultimately dismissed the cases, enabling our clients to remain in their apartment without fear of eviction.



Helping a Victim of Harassment Keep Her Home

Weil joined with The Legal Aid Society to represent a disabled single mother living with her 17-year-old son on the Lower East Side of New York and facing eviction from public housing. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) claimed that our client, who also suffered from depression and diabetes and survived on Supplemental Security Income and public assistance, should have her occupancy terminated, alleging that our client's boyfriend lived with her as an unauthorized occupant and that she made threatening remarks to a neighbor. The Weil team learned that the complaint was initiated by a neighbor against whom our client had an order of protection and that, in addition, she was both a witness and a victim in a criminal case pending against that same neighbor. Investigating further, the team found that the neighbor was constantly harassing and tormenting our client. Weil drafted a letter to NYCHA explaining why the case should be dismissed, attaching sufficient evidence of the reasons, and providing details of our client's ongoing criminal case and order of protection against her neighbor. After Weil made many unsuccessful attempts to reach the NYCHA attorney in charge of the case and after NYCHA reviewed our letter, the agency agreed that the case should be dismissed.

Blocking a Disabled Senior's Wrongful Eviction

The New York Supreme Court approved a settlement in May 2012 in which NYCHA agreed to restore our client's Section 8 subsidy and his landlord agreed to dismiss its eviction proceedings against him. Our client, a disabled, illiterate, chronically homeless senior, had been approved for a Section 8 subsidy, and NYCHA approved his lease of an apartment owned by a third-party landlord. Our client did not immediately move into the apartment, because he broke both his legs in an accident and underwent rehabilitation at a nursing home. Without providing any notice to our client, NYCHA terminated his Section 8 benefits and stopped paying its portion of the rent to our client's landlord. A few months after he completed his rehabilitation and moved into the apartment for the first time, the landlord began an eviction proceeding on the grounds that the loss of our client's Section 8 subsidy was a violation of the terms of his lease.

The Weil team, in partnership with The Legal Aid Society in our Housing Team initiative, responded by filing an Article 78 petition in which we demonstrated that NYCHA had failed to provide any notice of our client's Section 8 termination as required by both NYCHA's own internal rules and federal law. Weil negotiated an agreement with NYCHA and counsel for the landlord through which our client's Section 8 subsidy would be reinstated, NYCHA would make back payments on the Section 8 portions of his rent, and the landlord would drop the eviction proceeding and agree not to pursue our client's portion of the back rent. Our client's Section 8 subsidy has been restored, and he will be able to stay in his apartment.

Community and Economic Development

Providing Assistance for Low-Income Entrepreneurs

Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project

Over the past several years Weil has teamed with attorneys from the in-house counsel's office of CBS Corporation and the City Bar Justice Center Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project (NELP) to provide pro bono legal counsel to small business entrepreneurs in New York City. NELP provides free legal assistance to low-income micro-entrepreneurs interested in starting a small business or who have an existing one. The clinics are designed to bring together pro bono attorneys and low-income micro-entrepreneurs to provide legal services the clients might otherwise go without because of the traditionally high costs associated with these services. At the clinics, teams of Weil and CBS attorneys offer guidance on general corporate matters, and commercial leasing, contract, tax, and intellectual property issues. Clients come from all over New York City to seek help with building successful businesses.

Start Small Think Big

In partnership with Start Small Think Big, Weil has assisted small business owners and micro-entrepreneurs in New York City's South Bronx on a variety of topics that have helped them create sustainable and profitable businesses. A not-for-profit that brings high-quality financial development services and civil legal assistance to the South Bronx, Start Small seeks to empower New York's most underserved individuals to start, maintain, and expand small businesses so that they can accumulate assets, increase personal financial security, and contribute to the economy. The organization believes that small businesses are the engine of job growth and are especially crucial in underserved inner-city communities, where they make up 99 percent of all establishments and 80 percent of jobs. One of Start Small's main goals, connecting small business owners in need of legal advice with pro bono legal counsel in a clinic setting, has fit extremely well with Weil's own focus on issues related to the growth and development of small businesses and our desire to help entrepreneurs from one of the most economically challenged areas in the US.



Documenting the Wishes of the Elderly Poor

For many years now, in partnership with the Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) Elderly Project, Weil attorneys from all practice groups have assisted elderly people in the preparation of simple wills, medical directives, and powers of attorney, providing a critical service to poor and low-income clients in New York City. Initial meetings with the client take place at his or her home, or a senior citizen center near the home, and the attorney follows up with finalized documents for the client to sign. The VOLS Elderly Project provides a variety of pro bono legal services to elderly poor New Yorkers, many of them homebound.



Mapping Government Benefits for Hungary's Homeless

Weil's Budapest office assisted "The City is for All" (*A Város Mindenkié*, or AVM) in its efforts to protect the rights and benefits of homeless citizens. The Weil team prepared memoranda on certain legal aspects of Hungary's system of mandatory home-address registration and the relationship between this registry of residency and eligibility for social benefits. The memoranda offer a comprehensive description and interpretation of the most significant legal concepts and issues relating to the use of a citizen's home address by various government authorities. They also assess the health benefits available to homeless citizens with a particular focus on benefits that municipalities provide. We are now working with AVM volunteers to compile a compact booklet that provides homeless citizens with fundamental practical information in an easy-to-use form. The Budapest office also regularly provides technical support for AVM by reproducing publications, obtaining information from the land registry, and conducting phone and Internet research to assist attorneys in the "Street Lawyer" initiative through which the homeless receive free legal advice at one of the main metro stations in Budapest.

Fighting for the Rights of Public Housing Tenants

Weil joined the Neighborhood Legal Services Program in representing a group of public housing tenants who were being unlawfully removed from their homes in Washington, DC by the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA). DCHA relocated these tenants to substandard housing in order to rehabilitate the Highland Dwellings housing development, but did so without having secured the funding necessary to complete renovations and in violation of governing local and federal notice requirements and regulations requiring relocation to comparable housing. After Weil successfully fought DCHA's attempt to remove the case to federal court, where our clients would have had a less favorable audience, and after several hearings in the DC Superior Court and significant discovery, Weil secured a settlement with DCHA. In it DCHA was required to give tenants regular updates on the progress of the renovations and to involve them in selecting temporary housing during relocations. The settlement also guaranteed the tenants' right to return to Highland Dwellings and that the development will remain public housing for the next 40 years.

Preserving Housing Choice for the Disadvantaged

In a matter referred by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (WLC), Weil represented Section 8 housing subsidy recipients who suffered from unlawful discrimination based on source of income. The matter involved a landlord in Montgomery County, Maryland who was allegedly unfairly discriminating against residents paying their rent with Section 8 housing vouchers. After conducting extensive interviews with one of the residents, the WLC, and the Equal Rights Center, a not-for-profit civil rights organization whose attempt to negotiate with the landlord had been unsuccessful, the Weil team determined that the landlord's activities were prohibited discriminatory acts under Montgomery County law. Assisted by the WLC, Weil first negotiated a standstill agreement providing temporary relief for Section 8 residents and ultimately negotiated a settlement with the landlord that provided very favorable equitable relief, including fair leasing terms for Section 8 residents and mandatory fair housing training for the landlord. In addition, one of the residents received monetary compensation from the landlord. The WLC recognized Weil for its efforts in this and other fair housing matters at the WLC's annual event.

Community and Economic Development

Jump-Starting Young People's Job Prospects

Weil advised the UK firm Bridges Ventures on its investment in Auto22, part of the national charity Catch22. Located in Gravesend in Kent, England, Auto22 operates a vocational training center and a commercially run garage, where it offers disadvantaged young people opportunities to gain qualifications, skills, and employment in car mechanics. The investment will facilitate the development of additional garages in the vicinity, and Auto22 will provide Bridges Ventures with an opportunity to help to build a social enterprise in the training and employment sector. A sustainable-growth investment firm, Bridges Ventures uses its commercial expertise to achieve social or environmental objectives as well as attractive returns for investors. Bridges made its investment in Auto22 under its Social Entrepreneurs Fund, which aims to address the funding gap often faced by fast-growing social enterprises looking to scale their business.



Improving End-of-Life Care

Weil is assisting longtime pro bono client DC Appleseed in its efforts to improve the ability of residents of the District of Columbia to make timely, informed choices about the nature of medical care they will receive as they approach the end of their life and to enhance the medical community's ability to respond to these types of patient choices. In particular, we have conducted an extensive review of the legal framework surrounding these issues and consulted with local stakeholders and experts to better determine how effectively that framework is serving the needs of area residents. We are using the results of this review to assist DC Appleseed and its other pro bono advisers in the preparation of a white paper on end-of-life issues. Future work will include identifying and addressing perceived deficiencies in the legislative and regulatory framework related to end-of-life planning and end-of-life and palliative care, developing a public outreach program aimed at education and awareness for patients, families, physicians, and the community as a whole, and coordinating with other jurisdictions in the metropolitan DC area.

Hurricane Disaster Relief

The devastation caused by Superstorm Sandy reached far into the communities of New York and the surrounding areas, affecting homeowners, apartment tenants, small businesses, and others. Weil directed its pro bono efforts toward providing up-to-date, critical information on obtaining assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), including how to appeal a denial of FEMA aid, an area of expertise developed by Weil in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. We led a training session, broadcast nationally by Probono.net, on FEMA appeals and served as a go-to resource nationwide for pro bono attorneys and for others needing related legal services. Attorneys from nearly every Weil office in the US participated, handling more than 40 FEMA appeals and helping small businesses reorganize. With The Legal Aid Society, Weil won a major victory in New York Supreme Court for nearly 400 households displaced by Hurricane Sandy: the court enjoined the City of New York from unilaterally discontinuing a program that provided hotel rental assistance until the household members could secure other housing.

<h1>Criminal Justice Reform</h1>				
<p>“A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right.”</p>				<p>— <i>Thomas Paine</i></p>

One of the noblest callings of pro bono attorneys is to free the innocent and reverse other grave errors of the criminal justice system. In achieving these ends, we are privileged to work with dedicated partners such as the Innocence Project and local public defenders. They battle every day to set aside unjust convictions and sentences and promote reforms that can prevent wrongful imprisonments.

Rectifying an Unfair Sentence

Along with co-counsel Ben Ostrer and Saratoga County Public Defender John Ciulla, Weil represented a client whose plea over a decade ago was illegally induced by the serious misconduct of a state forensics lab scientist. Our client pleaded guilty to felony murder after she and her boyfriend were accused of robbing and killing her step-great-grandmother in 2000. She was in high school at the time and had just turned 18. She had consistently maintained that she was outside the home when the boyfriend killed her step-great-grandmother. However, there was forensic fiber evidence that contradicted our client’s version of events. As a result, the public defender advised her to plead guilty to felony murder with the understanding that she would cooperate and testify against her boyfriend. She testified at the boyfriend’s trial, during which she was cross-examined about the fiber evidence. The boyfriend was acquitted. Our client received a sentence of 20 years to life.

Almost a decade after her guilty plea, a probe of the state forensics lab by the New York Inspector General’s office revealed that the scientist who had performed the tests on the fiber evidence leading our client to plead guilty was incompetent and routinely fabricated reports on such evidence. Weil and co-counsel Ben Ostrer filed a motion to vacate our client’s plea and sentence, which the county court judge granted. When the district attorney appealed, Weil took the lead in writing the appellate brief and arguing the case in the Third Department, which, in April 2012, affirmed the decision of the county court. Our client entered an Alford plea, hence without admitting guilt, to manslaughter and burglary, and in May 2012 was sentenced to 14½ years. As a result of time already served, she was released from prison shortly thereafter (July 2012).

Criminal Justice Reform

Defending the Right to Effective Capital Representation

Weil was asked to take on the representation of a Florida death-row inmate in 1989, a matter that has become our longest pro bono litigation. Over the years, Weil has steadily pursued challenges to our client's conviction and death sentence in state and federal courts. Most recently, the federal district court in Tampa held a three-day evidentiary hearing on our client's claim that he did not receive effective assistance of counsel at the penalty phase of his capital trial. The crux of his claim is that his trial counsel – having never before tried a capital case and lacking any meaningful supervision – did not conduct a constitutionally adequate background investigation and failed to uncover significant mitigating evidence, including the serious and sustained abuse he suffered as a child. After hearing testimony from several lay and expert witnesses, the district court denied relief on that claim. The US Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, however, granted our client a Certificate of Appealability to take an appeal from that decision. Weil has briefed the appeal, which is currently pending before that court.

Holding a Prosecutor Accountable

Weil assisted lawyers from the Innocence Project in filing a 140-page report requesting that former Williamson County (Texas) District Attorney Ken Anderson be investigated for his role in concealing exculpatory evidence from our client Michael Morton. Wrongfully convicted in 1987 of murdering his wife, Morton served nearly 25 years in prison. At trial, Anderson was ordered to turn over to the court for review and possible disclosure to the defense the reports and notes of the lead investigator. When DNA testing proved Morton's innocence in August 2011, the sealed envelope submitted by Anderson at trial was opened, revealing that the investigator's complete reports and notes – including several pieces of evidence that directly supported Morton's theory of the crime – were never shown to the trial court or to defense counsel. In December 2011, Morton was formally exonerated. In a rare move, he requested that a court of inquiry be convened to determine whether Anderson, now a state district judge, broke state laws or ethics rules.

After Michael Morton's request was granted, Weil assisted the Innocence Project in responding to a subpoena issued by the court of inquiry at the prompting of defendant Ken Anderson. The Weil team was successful in limiting the scope of the subpoena and providing an appropriate response. Weil stayed involved in the case and in related discovery up through the court of inquiry hearing, which took place in February 2013. In April 2013, Ken Anderson was taken into custody after the court of inquiry found probable cause that Anderson had committed criminal contempt by concealing exculpatory evidence during the 1987 trial. Anderson has since posted bail and intends to appeal the ruling.

Improving Access to Ohio Public Records

On behalf of the Innocence Project and the Innocence Network, Weil filed an *amicus curiae* brief with the Ohio Supreme Court, providing the court with national and Ohio-specific data on the importance of public records in post-conviction innocence work and urging it to clarify language from its 1994 decision used by some police departments and prosecutors to justify refusal to turn over public records under the Ohio Public Records Act (OPRA).

According to the National Registry of Exonerations, there have been more than 1,110 recorded exonerations in the United States since 1989, a conservative figure based only on formal decisions by courts and executive officers. (It excludes wrongfully convicted defendants who have not been formally exonerated and more than a thousand others whose convictions were dismissed in "group exonerations" following major police scandals.) The majority of the formal exonerations were made possible solely because of information obtained through open public records laws. In Ohio, organizations such as the Ohio Innocence Project and the Wrongful Convictions Project at the Ohio Public Defender's Office rely heavily on public records laws like OPRA to investigate innocence claims and to prevent future wrongful convictions by researching their causes and pursuing legislative and administrative reform initiatives. The majority of Ohio exonerations occurred only because information concerning old police investigations and trial proceedings was obtained under OPRA.

The *amicus* brief advocated having the Ohio Supreme Court clarify that OPRA should be interpreted in light of Ohio's move to an open-file discovery system and any doubts resolved in favor of disclosure of public records. The court ruled in May 2013 that neither of two criminal laws at issue "precludes an accused from obtaining public records from law enforcement agencies" – among the helpful language in the decision that can be used to support future requests for public records by the Innocence Project and the Innocence Network.





Pressing for Post-Conviction Justice

Attorneys from Weil's Washington, DC and New York offices represented the Innocence Project as *amicus curiae* in support of Clifford Jones, a man who was convicted of rape and murder in 1981 solely upon the identification of a single eyewitness who gave inconsistent descriptions of the perpetrator and was using heroin, both at the time of the crime and four months later when she identified Mr. Jones. No physical evidence was available at the time of the trial, but more recently Mr. Jones was able to obtain DNA testing of two key items of evidence: hairs recovered from the baseball cap worn by the perpetrator and fingernail scrapings recovered from the homicide victim after the struggle with the perpetrator. The results excluded Mr. Jones, who accordingly sought to vacate his conviction. Despite this new exculpatory evidence and the limited circumstances under which a court may deny a request to vacate a conviction, the trial court denied Mr. Jones's motion without holding an evidentiary hearing. Weil's *amicus* brief focused on the erroneous nature of the trial court's decision, the significance of the scientific evidence excluding Mr. Jones, and the appropriate weight that should be given to scientific evidence in the context of a case in which the conviction is based on a single eyewitness. We are awaiting a ruling from the First Department of New York's Appellate Division.

Weil has received notable recognition from numerous charitable and pro bono organizations in 2012, including:

- Boston Bar Association Recognition for Pro Bono Leadership
- British Legal Awards CSR Initiative/Programme of the Year
- Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program Pro Bono Award
- *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* (Poland) Pro Bono Award
- Harris County Bench Bar Pro Bono Award
- Hungarian Bar Association Pro Bono Law Firm of the Year Award
- Legal Aid Society Innovative Pro Bono Initiative Award
- National Center for Law & Economic Justice Inaugural Pro Bono Leadership Award
- New York State Bar Association President's Pro Bono Award
- Sanctuary for Families Award for Excellence in Pro Bono
- State Bar of Texas Pro Bono Award
- Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs Outstanding Achievement Award

Environmental

“But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself.”

— *Rachel Carson*

With the disruptive force of climate change growing ever more apparent, perhaps no set of concerns weighs as heavily on our collective future as the environment and conservation. Weil is significantly involved in these issues globally, as well as with local environmental matters that affect the health and safety of the communities in which we work and live.

Advising an Eco-Venture That Can Profit the Poor

In a matter referred by Beyond Capital Fund, Weil represented Waste Capital Partners, Inc., a US-based social enterprise that is creating a commercial investment market in the developing world for environmentally sound and socially responsible solid waste management and carbon credit development. Waste Capital works in partnership with Waste Ventures, a US-based 501(c)(3) charity, which identifies and helps develop waste-picker cooperatives in India, offering them startup, technical, and management support. Through its support of an Indian subsidiary, Waste Capital Partners helps manage municipal waste in smaller Indian cities, such as Motihari, as well as providing waste pickers with an opportunity to earn a wage, improve their children's school attendance, and recycle waste. An innovative blueprint combines door-to-door collection, waste separation, composting, and recycling to increase waste-picker income. Weil provided general corporate governance and tax advice and reincorporated Waste Capital in Delaware after analyzing the company's capital structure.

Counseling a Cultivator of the Urban Ecosystem

Referred to Weil by New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, BioCities, Inc. is a not-for-profit that both educates the public about urban environmental issues and builds projects to further understanding about how urban ecosystems function. Through its Transforming Cities educational program, for example, BioCities brings together leaders and environmental emerging voices to present, discuss, and debate ideas, leading to real action. Among the future “build” projects it is supporting is a three-acre rooftop farm paired with a hydroponic operation in New York City, utilizing principles of industrial symbiosis. Weil has assisted the organization with its 501(c)(3) application and is providing ongoing counseling related to one of the projects BioCities is building.

Assuring a 'Hard Look' at a School Site's Toxic Past

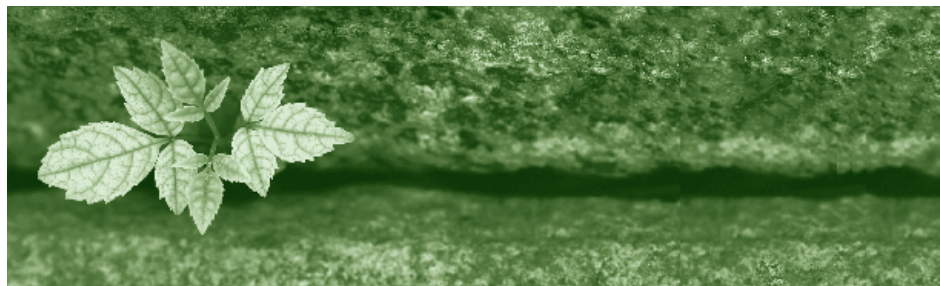
Along with co-counsel New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), Weil won a significant victory from the New York Court of Appeals for our client, the Bronx Committee for Toxic Free Schools, in its challenge of proposed school construction on a former industrial site. Upholding the decisions of the lower courts, the Court of Appeals ruled that agencies must comply with all the requirements of New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) even when the agency enrolls the contaminated site in the State's voluntary Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) and meets the BCP requirements.

The case was filed on behalf of residents of the Mott Haven community in the Bronx, who claimed that the New York City School Construction Authority failed to take a "hard look" at the environmental mitigation issues identified at a contaminated former industrial site in their neighborhood, where a new school campus site was being constructed. Weil and NYLPI brought an Article 78 petition against the School Construction Authority to enforce SEQRA. The trial court agreed that the City had not complied with SEQRA and ordered it to take supplemental measures to explain its plan for long-term maintenance and monitoring of engineering controls to contain the contamination. The Appellate Division affirmed the decision, as did the Court of Appeals.



Helping to Build a Green Future

Weil has been assisting Solar One, an organization that manages Stuyvesant Cove Park, a sustainably operated two-acre space on land that was once an abandoned industrial site, and also manages a small environmental education center at the park. Solar One uses Stuyvesant Cove Park as open green space for the public and has developed an array of programs promoting urban sustainability and education, including providing green jobs training and teaching students at New York City schools how to live sustainably in their urban environment through such initiatives as the Green Design Lab program. The organization is also planning to build Solar 2, a new education and arts center that will feature cutting-edge clean technology systems. The Solar 2 building will be energy-positive and one of the first in the country designed to be resilient to superstorms like Sandy. Over the past few years Weil has provided legal assistance in such matters as negotiating leases for Solar One's administrative offices and, in 2012, its training facility in Long Island City.



WEILGREEN

WEILGREEN, the firmwide environmental initiative, continued to raise awareness and identify and implement greener business practices in 2012-2013. Earth Week 2013 activities in New York included: film screenings on topics such as plastic bag consumption in the US and the vanishing of honeybees worldwide; the posting of clearer recycling signage in pantries; and a month-long electronics recycling drive. Funds raised from the drive will be donated to a local park group for the purchase and planting of trees.

Earth Week 2013 saw robust activity at other offices as well. The DC office hosted a presentation by two green building experts on ways to reduce our environmental footprint at home and at the office. In Boston employees learned about ways of reducing the impact of pesticides on the environment and on the food they eat, while those in Dallas collected hundreds of pounds of trash for Uptown Beautification Day. The Silicon Valley office sponsored its annual Recycled Art Project contest at local schools, and in London an expert explained how individuals, NGOs, and businesses can respond to environmental challenges.

WEILGREEN's work continues throughout the year, spearheaded by its Green Committees. In the past year alone, for instance, the New York Green Committee has revamped the office recycling program, eliminated plastic bottle water use for most conference-room catered meetings, implemented programs for free bike parking and battery and used-electronics recycling, and progressively introduced double-sided printing as a default option. Weil also helps to promote environmental solutions and share green best practices through groups such as the Law Firm Sustainability Network.

Human Rights

“Human beings the world over need freedom and security that they may be able to realize their full potential.”

— Aung San Suu Kyi

The struggle to protect human rights wherever they are under assault has been a longtime focus at Weil. Our attorneys assist in matters across a wide spectrum of issues from exploitation and neglect to the death penalty. In partnership with aid organizations, they assist people whose own society violates their dignity as human beings.

Removing a Roadblock to Lifesaving Aid in Burma

Weil was able to help Plan International, a children's development organization that works in 50 developing countries to promote children's rights and fight child poverty, resolve a problem that was thwarting its ability to provide humanitarian assistance in Burma. The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued a general license that would allow our client to carry out humanitarian activities in Burma, but the utility of that license was undermined by a combination of Burmese and OFAC requirements that prevented Plan International from opening and operating a bank account in Burma. The Burmese government allowed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to operate bank accounts only with the Myanmar Economic Bank and the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank, while OFAC prohibits any dealings with those banks without a specific OFAC license. Weil attorneys worked with the client, the State Department, and OFAC to obtain the necessary OFAC license, enabling Plan International to implement its lifesaving work in Burma.

Drafting the First Pact on Older People's Rights

Working with the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, a committee of the New York Bar Association dedicated to promoting access to justice and pro bono legal assistance in Latin America and Africa, Weil prepared a report for the Organization of American States (OAS) in connection with the OAS's Draft Inter-American Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons. The report analyzed the extent to which the draft convention captured the best practices regarding the elderly in the human rights laws of countries in the Western Hemisphere and is based on a survey conducted by the OAS of 30 such countries as well as Weil's analysis of the law in China, the Czech Republic, France, and Hungary. The Fundación Pro Bono of Chile and the Red Pro Bono Internacional assisted in this effort.



Battling the Death Penalty with Citizenship Papers

Weil has continued to advise Reprive, a UK-based organization that promotes prisoners' and human rights, on supporting the claims of a US death-row prisoner to Hungarian nationality and incorporating the grant of Hungarian citizenship into his appeal. Weil's Budapest office, in partnership with the ABA Death Penalty Due Process Review Project, advised on matters of Hungarian law, including the process of having his Hungarian citizenship recognized, and in close cooperation with Reprive, Weil collected data from numerous public registers and national archives about the prisoner's family background in Hungary going as far back as the 1940s. As a result of the thorough research and Weil's assistance with the Office of Immigration and Nationality, the prisoner's Hungarian citizenship was recognized. The impact may be significant because he will now be able to receive consular support from the Hungarian government.



We also continue to advise Reprive on the laws governing the export of drugs from the United Kingdom and the European Union for use in executions in the United States. Reprive's pressure has led the UK government, and with Weil's support, the rest of Europe, to outlaw the export of sodium thiopental, the anesthetic most commonly used in execution protocols by American states.

In September 2012 Reprive nominated Weil for the PILnet European Award for Partnership in the Public Interest in connection with the work of our Budapest and London offices.

Guiding the Transgendered Through a Name Change

Weil has been supporting the work of the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund, which is committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, community organizing, and public policy efforts. For many transgender people, a legal name change is a first step toward conforming their legal identities to the way they identify and live their lives. But securing a legal name change, which involves interaction with the court system and judges, can be an intimidating experience that is foreign to many people. By pairing transgender community members with pro bono lawyers in private practice, the Name Change Project ensures that transgender people can successfully negotiate the legal process and move forward with their lives. Weil attorneys from all practice areas interview clients, then assist in the preparation of the name change petition that is filed with the civil court and accompany the client to court for the name change hearing.



Not-for-Profits

“If we do not lay out ourselves in the service of mankind, whom should we serve?”

— *Abigail Adams*

While not-for-profit groups benefit from the energy and idealism of workers and sponsors, they still require legal assistance on a wide range of issues to fulfill their mission. Weil is proud to provide this help to many of the world's leading charitable organizations as they work to better the lives of the disabled, ill, and disadvantaged.

Not-for-Profit Practice Group

Weil's commitment to the not-for-profit sector is supported by the Firm's Not-for-Profit practice group. Founded in 2006, the group comprises Weil lawyers from a wide array of practice specialties. It works to marshal and align the vast spectrum of Weil's not-for-profit efforts, while also providing a source of collective experience and expertise in the not-for-profit arena. As a result of the group's efforts, the Firm's pro bono transactional practice has emerged as an industry leader, recognized as a premier provider of legal services for the not-for-profit sector. The group, in cooperation with Weil's Pro Bono Committee, hosted its eighth annual Not-for-Profit Board Governance Symposium in May 2013. The symposium, now an established event within the not-for-profit community, focuses on good governance and practical solutions in an era of enhanced challenges, financial stress, heightened expectations, and rigorous regulatory scrutiny confronting this all-important sector.

Aiding the Deafblind in Less Developed Nations

Weil, in collaboration with counsel at HSBC, advised Sense International on putting in place certain arrangements to govern the relationship between the organization and its overseas offices. Sense International is a charity registered in England that aims to transform the lives of deafblind people in less developed countries by, among other things, operating programs in various countries through its overseas offices in Peru, India, Kenya, Romania, Tanzania, and Uganda. We advised on a memorandum of understanding between the parent charity and its in-country offices as well as a template grant agreement for use between them. Sense International and its overseas offices now have a good mutual understanding, which can form the basis of effective future interaction for the benefit of deafblind communities, and the ability to channel funds from donor organizations in an efficient manner without having to keep returning to the legal drawing board. Much-needed funds can be put to work on the crucial local projects and initiatives for which they are intended.

Not-for-Profits

Paving the Way for a Harlem School's Resurgence

Weil represented Harlem School of the Arts in New York in the unraveling and release of a complicated debt structure, allowing for financial stability and effective fundraising efforts. HSA, housed in an award-winning 37,000-square-foot facility nestled at the base of Harlem's historic Hamilton Heights, is committed to enriching the lives of young people and their families in Harlem and the New York metropolitan area by providing excellent on-site arts instruction and vital outreach partnerships with New York City schools. HSA presents quality community performances and programs attracting diverse audiences to its dynamic cultural arts facility and offers essential workspace for aspiring artists. After nearly 50 years of history, the school's survival was jeopardized when, under previous management, it ran out of funds and was temporarily shut down. Following the complete replacement of HSA's board and management, the school reopened with new funds and, with Weil's assistance, was able to pay off and unwind a risky, expensive mortgage swap financing, clearing the way for a bright future.

Promoting the Special Talents of the Autistic

Weil's Warsaw office assisted the Specialist People Foundation, a not-for-profit organized under the laws of Denmark, with the establishment of a corporate structure in Poland consisting of a foundation and a limited liability company fully controlled by the foundation. The organization's aim in Poland is to enable people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, primarily Asperger's Syndrome, to be hired in Poland by the foundation's business partners. They are employed as consultants and software beta testers, and in many other roles that require a high degree of attention to detail, diligence, and strong logical and analytical thinking, such as the testing of business critical IT systems, software management and design, programming, data conversion, filing, data logistics, and data acquisition. Our client also provides assessment, training, and education services for people with autism to assess their performance capabilities in a job setting. Specialist People Foundation is working to further expand its operations in Europe, Asia, and North America.

Advising Two Innovative Healthcare Charities

We supported two very important UK healthcare charities whose work touches the lives of many of our staff. Macmillan Cancer Support is the leading charity in the UK providing practical, medical, and financial support for people affected by cancer. We are currently advising the charity on software support contracts that are business critical for managing its relationship with its 1,200 employees. Terrence Higgins Trust is a leading provider of sexual healthcare services, and we are advising it on a wide range of matters, including contracting with local authorities for providing services and appropriate procurement policies.





Arranging a Phone Deal That Will Serve the Elderly

Weil advised the charity Age UK on the contractual arrangements for development and sale of an innovative new mobile phone aimed at the elderly market. As Age UK is a preeminent brand among the elderly in the UK, the mobile provider was keen to pilot and launch this simple, user-friendly phone – which comes pre-programmed with up to ten numbers of family and friends – with the charity. Age UK and the mobile provider conducted complex negotiations concerning their respective obligations for supplying and marketing the phones and then sharing revenue. The deal was signed in October 2012, and the client fully recognized the benefit of having Weil's commercial advice on a project that it hopes will generate much-needed revenue and provide a valuable new service.

Forming a Unified Front Against Epilepsy

Weil represented the Epilepsy Foundation in its merger with the Epilepsy Therapy Project to create the leading US not-for-profit organization dedicated to fighting epilepsy. The boards of directors of both organizations unanimously approved the merger on December 18, 2012, and the merger took effect on January 1, 2013.

The Epilepsy Foundation was founded in 1968. Among its many services, the national organization, along with a nationwide network of local affiliates, provides a supportive care network for patients and families, public awareness campaigns, and educational programs. The Epilepsy Therapy Project has focused on the goal of accelerating the clinical development of innovative therapies for people with epilepsy. Through the success of an existing joint venture, the two organizations together have provided funding for 42 of the 85 known drugs and devices in active development, resulting in the introduction of three new epilepsy products in the past year. The merger will enable the new organization, under the name of the Epilepsy Foundation, to combine the strengths of each to become a stronger, more unified leader on the issues that are most important to epilepsy patients and their families.

Expanding the Resources of a Disability Charity

Weil continues to provide extensive support to Scope, the UK's leading disability charity, after having advised it in connection with its pioneering £20 million social bond listing on the Luxembourg Stock Exchange. That initiative raised funds for Scope to invest in income-generating activities that pay for support, advice, and information Scope provides to disabled people and their families in England and Wales. In 2012 we advised Scope on a number of legal issues, including pursuit of outstanding monies owed by a company recycling unsold clothes from Scope charity shops and successfully registering the charity's title to land that previous legal advisers had overlooked. Weil's London office received the British Legal CSR Project of the Year award in October 2012 for our advice in connection with the social bond listing and has continued to play a leading role in the emerging area of social finance, hosting the launch of the Social Stock Exchange. SSE's online portal will become the world's first information platform to showcase publicly listed social impact businesses and provide investors with the information they need to identify and compare those organizations that deliver value to society and the environment.

Supporting Organizational Renewal at an LGBT Bellwether

Referred by New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, the Gay Officers Action League (GOAL) initially sought advice on how to enter into a fiscal sponsorship arrangement as the means to raise funds for an international police conference it hosted in 2009. The Weil team advised GOAL, a charitable and educational organization with broad public support, in its successful application to the Internal Revenue Service to become recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization and in related corporate and tax matters. Weil's advice helped GOAL update its 25-year-old organization and position itself to garner even more public support and other funding to advance its mission of promoting a positive relationship between the law enforcement and LGBT communities.

Not-for-Profits

Forging a 'Dream' Joint Venture to Fight Childhood Cancers

Weil represented the St. Baldrick's Foundation in connection with a joint venture with Stand Up To Cancer (SU2C) to establish a pediatric "Dream Team" dedicated to childhood cancer research. St. Baldrick's, the largest private funder of childhood cancer research grants, is a volunteer-driven charity known worldwide for its signature head-shaving events, where volunteers go bald to stand in solidarity with children fighting cancer and raise money to support research. The joint venture with SU2C, an initiative of the Entertainment Industry Foundation to accelerate cancer research, brings together two of the world's leading cancer research fundraising groups and will provide \$14.5 million in funding over four years. The Dream Team will unite researchers in two distinct disciplines of translational pediatric cancer research – genomics and immunotherapeutics – to target the most lethal and difficult-to-treat forms of pediatric cancers. As part of the project, Weil attorneys negotiated a complex set of joint venture arrangements covering research grant selection and funding, intellectual property rights, and television rights related to segments featuring St. Baldrick's on the SU2C primetime telethon that was widely aired in September 2012.

Returning Cultural Assets to a Children's Charity

Weil advised Barnardo's in its dispute with a film production company over the ownership of tapes of the UK children's charity's historically significant film archive. Founded in 1867 to provide care to children living in squalor in London's slums, Barnardo's became a pioneer in using moving film to document social issues affecting children. It built a large archive of original footage that is much sought after as source material by television companies worldwide.

In the 1990s, Barnardo's made arrangements for the original material to be copied onto tape for easy access. The production company that did the copying returned the original footage, but it was agreed informally that it should keep possession of the tapes so as to handle copy requests more easily. This arrangement was the basis for all subsequent dealings between the parties until a few years ago. In 2011, Barnardo's received an urgent request from a journalist for access to the whole archive in contemplation of a new TV documentary. The charity requested the return of all its tapes from the production company and was surprised when the company claimed ownership and offered to sell them back to Barnardo's for £50,000. After a protracted negotiation, Weil completed several rounds of mediation. The company eventually conceded ownership of the tapes to Barnardo's in return for a nominal sum.

Supporting the Auschwitz Memorial Foundation

Weil provided legal advice in several important areas to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, a memorial endowment fund primarily designed for the restoration and maintenance of the site in Poland of the former German concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau through support for the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. Our advice included assistance in drafting legislation beneficial to the foundation that would be enacted in Poland as well as numerous agreements with foreign governments supporting the foundation's work. Funding for the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation comes mainly from donations from foreign governments, but the organization also accepts individual private donations. It is one of the first Polish endowment funds designed to ensure long-term support for the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.

Preserving the Memory of Jewish Life in Poland

Weil was instrumental in creating the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, a cultural institution established on the basis of a public-private partnership between the Polish central government, the Warsaw municipal government, and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, a private institution and Weil's pro bono client. Construction of the Museum's building was finished in April 2012, and the Association is now working on the permanent exhibition, which should be completed in the spring of 2014. Weil is providing ongoing legal services to the Association, which is a Museum founding partner and whose mission it is to maintain and preserve the memory of the history and culture of Polish Jewry and its contribution to world culture.

Opening Up State Records to Aid Not-for-Profits

Weil represented Lawyers Alliance for New York, the leading provider of business and transactional legal services for not-for-profit organizations that help low-income New Yorkers, in its effort to obtain not-for-profit executive compensation information compiled by Governor Andrew Cuomo's Task Force on Not-For-Profit Entities. Lawyers Alliance submitted several Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests for records relating to a Task Force questionnaire concerning executive compensation so that it could participate in the consideration of proposed legislation on not-for-profit executive compensation. The Task Force denied our client's FOIL requests, claiming that the records fell within FOIL's law enforcement investigation exemption and that some of them could also be protected by the trade-secret exemption. Weil filed an Article 78 challenge to the denial in state court, arguing that the Task Force lacked law enforcement authority, that disclosure of the records would not interfere with any law enforcement investigation, and that the trade-secret exemption was inapplicable. Ultimately, the matter was settled, and Lawyers Alliance was able to obtain most of the information it sought.

Weil Externships

The Firm is particularly proud of its externship programs, which allow full-time associates the opportunity to work exclusively on pro bono matters with leading public service and charitable organizations for a period of several months.

Because of the expanded time frame of our externship assignments, associates are able to witness and appreciate the difference their efforts make, and the knowledge and skills they acquire on these assignments enhance not only their sense of social responsibility but also their legal acumen.

New to the Firm's externships is The Legal Aid Society Criminal Practice Program, where volunteer attorneys assist Legal Aid in its representation of approximately 220,000 indigent defendants. Providing free legal service to the Bronx community of New York, our assignments include criminal defense work on misdemeanor cases, research and investigations, preparing witnesses, and arguing motions.

Examples of some additional externships offered at Weil include:

- Weil corporate associates work at Lawyers Alliance for New York with a wide variety of clients, advising on matters ranging from economic and community development projects and contract and lease negotiations to mergers of not-for-profits and financial reorganizations.
- Weil's externship program at the New York City Law Department provides litigation associates the opportunity to assist the Office of the Corporation Counsel with depositions, motions, and trials.
- At Legal Services NYC, Weil litigation associates help disadvantaged New Yorkers while gaining valuable, hands-on litigation experience in areas such as housing, bankruptcy, Social Security disability, and parental and children's rights.
- Weil and the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program (DVAP), a joint program of the Dallas Bar Association and Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, work together on the Lend-A-Lawyer Program assisting low-income Dallas residents with their legal problems. While onsite at the DVAP offices, our attorneys handle civil cases, participate in weekly legal clinics, and work closely with DVAP's mentoring lawyers to aid clients. Weil's Dallas summer associates also assist staff in providing legal services to the poor, spending a week of their clerkship at DVAP's offices.
- Trainees from Weil's London office are seconded on a rotating basis to the Bar Pro Bono Unit, a UK-based pro bono charity organization that one day a week helps members of the public gain access to legal counsel. The trainees assist with the prioritization and allocation of cases and are an invaluable resource for the unit.
- Weil's New York summer associates are given the opportunity to participate in the Firm's pro bono summer externship program by spending two weeks at a public interest organization. These externships afford summer associates the opportunity to attend pro bono training programs, work alongside staff attorneys, conduct administrative hearings, assist on appeals, and interview clients. Apart from externships, summer associates are also assigned pro bono cases under the supervision of attorneys in the various practice groups through which they rotate.
- Summer associates from Weil's Washington, DC office participate in the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. With training and attorney supervision, each summer associate provides advice and assistance to potential clients on issues of homelessness, the shelter appeals process, income assistance, medical needs, and public benefits.

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