

Vance News

February 2014

Vance Center Environment Program Director Speaks at Princeton Conference



On February 7, Vance Center **Environment Program Director, Susan Kath**, spoke on a panel, ***Climate Change, Global Health and Human Rights***, sponsored by **Princeton University's Program in Global Health and Health Policy**. The program, organized in conjunction with Princeton's Spring 2014 Global Health Colloquium, featured a talk by Dr. Marcos A. Orellana, Director of the Environmental Health Program at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). In his talk, Dr. Orellana discussed the global implications that climate change has for the extraterritorial obligations of actors in a state-centered system and how a human rights-based approach should be used to address the global health impacts of disease and disasters caused by climate change.

Ms. Kath's presentation described her experience litigating climate change cases and the Vance Center's work for **John Knox, the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment**. She shared how that research, based on global and regional sources, points towards the human rights obligations that potentially arise in connection with climate change and the protection of vulnerable groups, including women, children and indigenous peoples. Joining Ms. Kath on the panel were Joe Amon, Director of the Health and Human Rights Division, Human Rights Watch, and Adrianna Petryna, Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Professor in Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania.

(Photo: Susan Kath, Director of Vance Center Environment Program. Credit: Irene Jeon)

New Vance Center Clients and Projects

The Vance Center regularly receives requests for legal advice from existing clients, as well as new ones they introduce to us or who hear about us in other ways. We work with the clients to develop focused projects and recruit law firms from one or more countries, as appropriate,

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to co-counsel with our lawyers on the projects, all of course on a pro bono basis. In recent weeks, we have started with the following clients and projects:

- A Latin American NGO striving to secure clean water for indigenous and Afro-descendent communities;
- An African NGO advocating for disclosure of state information, based on the experience of truth commissions in various countries;
- A Latin American NGO taking a free expression case to the UN Human Rights Committee;
- An international strategic litigation NGO pursuing release of government information related to public security investigations in Latin America;
- An African NGO challenging proposed legislation restricting women's property rights, based on international and comparative standards;
- An international conservation NGO analyzing carbon validation and verification standards in a Latin American country.

Vance Center Hosts Argentine Fulbright Scholar



The Vance Center over the past year has hosted **Mariela Aisenstein**, a Fulbright visiting scholar from Argentina. Her research has assessed the effectiveness of public-interest litigation in Argentina and the United States in expanding the access to health care, education, and adequate housing. A graduate of Universidad Torcuato Di Tella in Argentina and Harvard Law School's LLM Program, Ms. Aisenstein developed the project after several years of litigating public-interest cases in Argentina, including at Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia, Asociación por los Derechos Civiles, and the Public Defender's Office of Buenos Aires. Ms. Aisenstein's research seeks to help policymakers in Latin America and the United States develop ways of strengthening implementation of courts' decisions in public interest cases. Referring to cases which she helped to bring in Argentina, Ms. Aisenstein observed that "[i]f implemented, the decisions would have significantly increased access for poor people to public services. Too often, however, the government did not comply with the courts' orders, either because it lacked the will or wherewithal to do so or because the decisions had failed to



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set up effective mechanisms for implementation.”

(Photo: Mariela Aisenstein, Fulbright Scholar. Credit: Mariela Aisenstein)

Vance Center South African Legal Fellows Program Launches New Year

The Vance Center’s **South African Legal Fellows Program** places South African lawyers from disadvantaged backgrounds with corporate law firms and corporate legal departments in New York City for one-year terms. The Vance Center is currently seeking applications from qualified lawyers for the 2014-15 term, which will begin in or around September 2014. Applicants must have at least two years of corporate-law experience in order to apply. Further information about the eligibility criteria and instructions for applying are available on the website of the **Law Society of South Africa**. The Vance Center also welcomes inquiries from law firms and legal departments based in New York that may be interested in hosting South African Legal Fellows.

A past participant in the program, Tholinlanhla Gcabashe, has just been named partner at the law firm of Bowman Gilfillan in Johannesburg. Tholi was a South African Legal Fellow at Sullivan & Cromwell in 2008-09.

For more information, please see the Vance Center’s brochure about the program or contact Elizabeth Millard, Managing Director of the Vance Center, at emillard@nycbar.org.