

## **Vance News**

February 2015

### **Vance Center Convenes Women Lawyers in Mexico to Address Professional Development and Leadership**

The Vance Center's Women in the Profession program recently sponsored the launch of an innovative mentoring initiative for Mexican women lawyers. Developed along with leaders of international and Mexican corporate legal departments and law firms, the mentoring initiative in its pilot phase is pairing 20 senior lawyers at corporations and law firms in Mexico with 20 junior lawyers, across organizations.

More than 130 lawyers attended the launch event, which took place at the 3M Innovation Center in Mexico City. Vance Center Committee members Sabrena Silver, Ruti Smithline, and Antonia Stolper and Vance Center Managing Director Elizabeth Millard attended, and Lic. Margarita Zavala gave the keynote address. Ms. Zavala, a lawyer who served in the Mexican Congress and as president of an advisory board to a government agency, frequently represented Mexico around the world when serving as first lady in the presidential administration of Felipe Calderon. Her address focused on how, by overcoming obstacles to professional advancement, women in Mexico had helped people to rethink women's roles in society.

The Vance Center helped develop the mentoring initiative along with lawyers from corporations like 3M, Ford, General Electric, Home Depot, Honeywell, JP Morgan, Novartis, and Scotiabank and several law firms, including Baker & McKenzie, Galicia Abogados, Greenberg Traurig, Mijares Angoitia Cortés y Fuentes, Nader Hayeux & Goebel, and Romo Paillés. Elizabeth Millard described the initiative as "an example of a concrete, effective measure that can be taken to promote the hiring, retention, promotion, and advancement of women lawyers." She added that the Vance Center will work with Mexican partners to share the details of the program with other lawyers across the Americas who may wish to implement similar programs in their countries.

The Vance Center's Women in the Profession program provides lawyers across the Americas with opportunities to work together to develop ways of promoting gender diversity in the legal profession. Begun as a program of the New York City Bar Association focused on lawyers in this city, it has extended under the Vance Center's direction over recent years to a range of events in Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina.





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### **Vance Center Promotes Social and Environmental Rights in Haiti's New Mining Regime**

The Vance Center has begun collaborating with the **Global Justice Clinic at New York University Law School** and the **Justice in Mining Collective (the Collective)**, a network of Haitian civil society and social movement organizations, to advocate for greater transparency in the Haitian governments' development of a new mining law. Haiti started revising its mining law in 2014 with guidance from the World Bank, but reportedly has not adequately taken into account the views of civil society and affected communities.

This lack of consultation and transparency has raised fears that the Haitian government will not properly address social and environmental rights in the new mining law. Haiti's environment is already fragile. The country retains a mere 1.5% of its forest cover and is vulnerable to earthquakes, heavy rains, and flooding, which makes difficult containing chemical waste and polluted water in the mining industry. Inadequate mining regulations have the potential of harming the environment even further. The Haitian government projects the mineral industry to be one of the four key elements to make Haiti an "emerging country" by 2030. However, without transparency and adequate protection of citizens' rights, Haiti's mineral riches may prove to be a curse, rather than contributing to the country's development.

The Vance Center is working with pro bono counsel to analyze the proposed mining law and advise on how better to implement social and environmental protections in the new law, taking into account the current political and economic context of Haiti. The analysis of the draft will be used by the Collective to strengthen its position in continued advocacy and consultation with the Haitian government and legislature, as well as the World Bank, on stronger social and environmental protections and transparency provisions in the draft mining law.

### **Vance Center Acknowledges New Signatories to the Pro Bono Declaration**



The Vance Center is pleased to announce 15 new signatories to the Pro Bono Declaration of the Americas, joining the extensive list of more than 500 signatories who are dedicating themselves to pro bono service:

- *Ateneo Dominicano from the Dominican Republic*
- *Colegio de Abogados de Honduras from Honduras*
- *Colegio de Abogados de la República Dominicana from the Dominican Republic*



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- Colegio de Abogados de Nicaragua *from Nicaragua*
- Colegio de Abogados y Notarios de Guatemala *from Guatemala*
- Colegio de Abogados *from Panamá*
- Consortium Centro América Abogados- Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica
- Consultores Jurídicos Difo & Asociados *from the Dominican Republic*
- De Los Santos Vargas Roja *from the Dominican Republic*
- Distinctive Law *from the Dominican Republic*
- Estrella & Tupete *from the Dominican Republic*
- Fundación Jurídica en Defensa del Consumidor (Funjudeco) *from the Dominican Republic*
- García Santana y Asociados *from the Dominican Republic*
- Mejía Abogados Consultores *from the Dominican Republic*
- Rotary Pro Bono, A.C. *from Mexico*

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### **Vance Center Hosts Human Rights Law Fellow from the Netherlands**



**Suzanne Knijnenburg**, an LL.M. graduate of the University of Amsterdam Law School, has joined the Vance Center team as a volunteer human rights law fellow. Ms. Knijnenburg previously interned with the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations and the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect and was a summer associate at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek in the Netherlands. At the Vance Center, Ms. Knijnenburg is working in the Human Rights and Access to Justice program on legal projects related to transitional justice, particularly in South Africa and Colombia, international criminal accountability, the prevention of mass atrocities, and LGBT rights, under the supervision of Programs Director Marie-Claude Jean-Baptiste.