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Leonard L. Cavise J.D.

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Law School Programs that Reduce Poverty: The Example of the Chiapas Human Rights Practicum

BY

LEONARD L. CAVISE, J.D.¹

The DePaul University College of Law offers the only program in the Mexican state of Chiapas for law students from the United States. The Chiapas Human Rights Practicum has operated for eight summers since its inception in 1999. Having evolved from merely an observational tour of Chiapas for Spanish-speaking DePaul law students, it now includes non-Spanish-speaking students and placements for several students in human rights offices where they work for the entire summer.

Chiapas was originally chosen for the program largely because it was very visibly conflictive and presented many opportunities for international visitors to observe human rights infringements in a situation of almost complete impunity. Over the years, what was an open war between the government of Mexico and the Zapatista army² has now turned into a low-intensity conflict wherein the struggle for land and indigenous rights is central.

The purpose of the program is to expose students to the poverty and conflict of Chiapas with the hope that the exposure will transform their world view sufficiently to persuade them to continue working in human rights or public service. With proper support and opportunities, those students could choose a professional path that would significantly contribute to the reduction of poverty in this and other countries.

This article will describe some of the experiences of the Chiapas program,³ and offer ideas on how to continue working with the students after the program is over to solidify their commitment to serve the poor.

The Traditional Law School Experience Does Not Encourage Public Service

Some background on the standard law school experience might be

¹ The author wishes to particularly thank the 2007 Chiapas group, whose comments during reflection sessions in San Cristobal, cited throughout this paper, helped me to crystallize my thoughts and served, far better than I could, to express the real meaning of this program.

² Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (EZLN).

³ The discussion focuses on the Chiapas program offered by the College of Law. DePaul is also unique in that it offers two Chiapas programs — the law school's, and another operated by Dr. Marco Tavanti of the Public Services Graduate Program.

helpful in understanding the need for more programs like the Chiapas Human Rights Practicum. There are few courses like "Law and the U.S. Role in the Developing World" or "The Waning of the Rule of Law" — and where they do exist, they are usually taught seminar-style for small groups of self-selected students.

Most law schools sponsor clinical or extern programs which are largely public-interest. There is also the occasional course in poverty law or civil rights, or more specifically tailored public-interest courses addressing subjects like affordable housing, child protection or consumer protection. Those are typically higher level courses that reach a smaller number of students, largely because poverty-oriented courses are not tested on the bar exam. There may also be specialized programs, like DePaul's Center for Public Interest Law, which attempt to create a community within the law school so that progressive or well-intentioned students do not feel completely marginalized. Finally, many schools offer experiential options like the Chiapas program, Hurricane Katrina immersion programs, or community-based volunteer programs.⁴

Otherwise, as law school professors, we are left only to squeeze notions of social justice and equality within the interstices of a traditional curriculum.

Many altruistic students entering law school with lofty dreams of public service find themselves beaten down by a constant diet of arid legal doctrine and the reluctance of mainstream faculty to include issues of the poor in their syllabi. Most faculty teach that "thinking like a lawyer" means to be critical and impersonal and to avoid subscribing to any particular value system.⁵ There is no "right" answer, the orthodoxy goes, and most positions are "arguable." The political connotations of a result, the values behind it, the theories that gave rise to it, and the effect a result has on society are all subordinated to the study of doctrine that exists in the sterilized world of law schools. As Professor Lopez puts it:

...who people are, how they live, how they struggle, how they suffer, how they interact with others, how others interact with them, and how they relate to conventional governmental and corporate power need not be taken into account in any sustained and serious way in training lawyers. Generic

⁴ The American Bar Association has recently added its important voice to the call for more socially-oriented and public service offerings for students in law school. In 2004 the ABA passed Standard 302(b)(2) providing that "...a law school shall offer substantial opportunities for... student participation in pro bono activities." Interpretation 302-10, passed in June 2005, clarified the Standard by stipulating that every school shall offer both law-related and non-law-related volunteer work opportunities.

⁵ Gerald P. Lopez, "Training Future Lawyers to Work with the Politically and Socially Subordinated: Anti-Generic Legal Education," 91 *West Virginia Law Review* 305 (1988-89).

legal education teaches law students to approach practice as if all people and all social life were homogeneous.”⁶

This approach to legal education causes substantial distress⁷ in many students who find themselves, as one put it, “the walking wounded: demoralized, dispirited, and profoundly disengaged from the law school experience.”⁸ To succeed, a student must suppress emotions or any sense of justice in favor of an “objective” and “reasonable” evaluation of cold facts separated from their social context.⁹ This sort of unhappiness may affect public-interest students more deeply than others because the public-interest student typically finds little succor or shelter in the typical business-oriented law school program. Law students also feel they have less time to think about their idealism when faced with the harsh realities of school, grades, the bar exam, and the job search.¹⁰ In the absence of value-based teaching or course content, and with few courses in the mainstream curriculum that even approach their values or interests, students often find that their positive motivations shift toward externally imposed values and motives.¹¹ Their grades may suffer because thinking “like a lawyer” discourages them from thinking as they ordinarily would and suppresses their socially-minded instincts. On the other hand, they may also be very successful academically, which can lead to tempting offers of high salaries from big firms that could turn them away from the public-interest passion that brought them to law school.¹²

History of the Chiapas Human Rights Practicum

Events in Chiapas captured my attention when conflict exploded in January

⁶ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁷ Lawrence Krieger, “Institutional Denial About the Dark Side of Law School, and Fresh Empirical Guidance for Constructively Breaking the Silence,” 52 *Journal of Legal Education* 114 (2002) [citations omitted]: commenting that anxiety, hostility, depression, and other symptoms among law students are eight to fifteen times that of the general population.

⁸ Note, “Making Docile Lawyers: An Essay on the Pacification of Law Students,” 111 *Harvard Law Review* 2027 (1998).

⁹ See Angela P. Harris and Marjorie M. Shultz, “A(nother) Critique of Pure Reason: Toward Civic Virtue in Legal Education,” 45 *Stanford Law Review* 1773, (1993).

¹⁰ Robert Stover, *Making It and Breaking It: The Fate of Public Interest Commitment during Law School*, 45-46 (1989).

¹¹ Harris and Schultz, “Critique of Pure Reason,” at 1773. In addition, Stover’s study also concluded that students who express commitment to the public interest drops by about 50 percent from the time of entry into law school to graduation year. Stover, *Making It and Breaking It*, 45-46.

¹² The top ten percent are usually invited to join the Law Review, from which the top firms usually recruit. With starting salaries at the top firms reaching \$160,000 in 2007, and with average student debt now topping \$100,000 for law school alone, the temptations are strong indeed.

1994 with the armed uprising of the Zapatistas and their temporary conquest of four towns, including the regional state capital. Subcomandante Marcos became, almost overnight, a hero to the indigenous poor of Chiapas and leftists around the world. I first visited Chiapas in late January 1994 as part of a delegation of North Americans seeking to observe the human rights situation and report on it.¹³



The indigenous people of Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state.

Photo courtesy of the author

Chiapas is the southernmost state in Mexico, bordering on Guatemala. It is the second richest biosphere in the western hemisphere. Its resources include hydroelectric energy, wood, pharmaceuticals, petroleum, and water.¹⁴ Its population is overwhelmingly indigenous and overwhelmingly poor.¹⁵ The indigenous speak any one of fifty-seven different languages¹⁶ and 36.5 percent do not speak Spanish.¹⁷ The figures on education, health services, infant and maternal mortality, and the other key social indices are on a par with the poorest countries of the world. Migration to the United States has increased dramatically since the onset of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in January, 1994,¹⁸ which forced Mexico to import heav-

¹³ See "Chiapas: The Rebellion of the Excluded," An EPICA Report (1994).

¹⁴ There is a middle class, but it exists primarily in the major population centers of Tuxtla Gutierrez, San Cristobal, Tapachula, and Palenque.

¹⁵ Of the 118 municipalities, 109 suffer a high or very high level of marginalization. Fully thirty-three of the forty-four most highly marginalized municipalities are predominantly indigenous. See Report of SIPZ, 14 February 2007, at www.sipaz.org.

¹⁶ Census of Mexico, 1990.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Migration to the United States from Chiapas has now reached close to 50,000 persons annually. See www.sipaz.org/data.

ily subsidized U.S. corn and many other products to the detriment of Mexican farmers.¹⁹ American companies are heavily invested in Chiapas, draining its natural resources and displacing thousands of Chiapaneco campesinos from their homelands.²⁰

Chiapas is also a laboratory for the investigation of human rights violations such as arbitrary detention and torture, violence against women, misuse of the justice system, development of paramilitary organizations, repression, community displacement, and, of course corruption. In short, the neoliberal model of economic domination by multinational companies and the abandonment by the Mexican government of whatever limited role it may have had in the advancement of social programs finds one of its greatest successes to date in Chiapas.²¹

What makes Chiapas a particularly attractive destination for a study-abroad program is that the contradictions between the poor and those who would exploit them are blatant and impossible to avoid or dismiss.²² Even the most naive or uninterested observer cannot help but see the disparities, discrimination, and maltreatment while profits are narrowly distributed to a privileged few. Chiapas is an economic, social, political, and sometimes military battleground in high relief.

It was not until 1998 that I learned of a funding opportunity which allowed me to take law students to Chiapas for the first time in May, 1999. After two weeks of introductory classes in the safety of Merida, a lovely colonial city in the Yucatan, my assistant and I took fourteen students to Chiapas for just a week. In those days there were blockades everywhere, and people doing human-rights work spoke in whispers. Our first meeting with Chiapanecos, an hour after getting off the plane, was under a tree away from

¹⁹ The Zapatista uprising was, in fact, timed to coincide with the effective date of the NAFTA accords.

²⁰ Some of the principal exploiters are Coca-Cola, Monsanto, and Ford Motor Company. Coca-Cola is accused of taking water previously belonging to ejidos — the collective community — and converting it for commercial use. In so doing, the accusation continues, the company contaminates the remaining water. Mexico consumes more Coca-Cola than any other country in the world. Ford Motor Company participates in “carbon capture,” by which the company “adopts” a forest, in this case the Lacandon jungle, to absorb emitted carbon and convert it into oxygen. The company is also urging the development of ecotourism and research projects in the Lacandon — all of which negatively affect indigenous communities already there. Monsanto produces genetically modified seeds for corn, cotton, tomato, and soy at a production center in the Chiapas’ Montes Azules region. They then copyright and market the seeds throughout the world. The unregulated dissemination of “transgenics” has been repeatedly detected throughout Chiapas. See Annual Report for 2005, CIEPAC at www.ciepac.org.

²¹ See Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy* (Duke, 1998), 170.

²² Leading more than one student to remark that Chiapas is “so different that it’s like another world.”

all buildings and traffic. Two hours later we were visiting Zapatistas incarcerated in the nearby prison.

Since that first program, restricted to Spanish-speaking students who spent just one week on the dusty back roads of Chiapas, we evolved into a three-week stay in Chiapas where everyone did some actual work in human-rights offices. In 2007 the program was opened to non-Spanish speakers for the first time, everyone spent ten days in Chiapas and some would stay for the summer. This summer's program was the eighth running of what is now called the Chiapas Human Rights Practicum.

The Importance of the Exposure to Poverty

It was always understood, by me at least, that the Chiapas experience would be of much more value to our students than to our hosts. In spite of the shortness of our stay, DePaul students have written articles about Chiapas, delivered a report to the United Nations, spoken at many events, and generally tried to educate their fellow law students and all Americans about a reality seldom seen. A few students have been able to continue, from a distance, concrete casework begun in Chiapas. A few others have developed friendships in Chiapas that have lasted. In addition, a modest financial contribution is made in the name of DePaul University to the offices where the students work, and people who meet with us are generally paid a small honorarium. Nonetheless, many students have commented that they felt they were taking more from Chiapas than they were giving.

The purpose of the program is to expose the students to poverty, transform their understanding of the root causes, nurture their commitment to change, and do this all so well that the university will institutionalize the program. Not many students have seen the kind of overwhelming poverty that hits the visitor to Chiapas, where it is common to see people living under tarps, in garbage dumps, and without water, electricity, sewage systems, schools, clinics, or anything else that most of us take for granted. For most law students it is a completely alien experience to see these conditions up close and, in some cases, to actually spend considerable time in these resource-deprived communities.

The program focuses on interacting with Chiapanecos so that the impact on students is far more than visual. The students come to understand something about the obstacles to decent living: the complete lack of financial support from government, the lack of infrastructure, the lack of training or education, and of course the unresponsiveness of the legal system. The meagerness of the peoples' material lives has always caused strong reactions in the students as they listened to the stories of hardship, deprivation, and disaster told with equanimity and without rancor. The issue is whether they can understand why so many live in poverty while so few live well.

Students learn that a few families own an enormous percentage of the land,²³ and that unemployment statistics hovering around 50 percent do not even count the chronically unemployed. Seventy percent of the people live below the poverty line. Almost 80 percent have no electricity or drinking water. Fully 85 percent have no drainage facilities and 80 percent have mud floors. The leading cause of death is poverty-related, and 54 percent suffer from malnutrition. Over 1.5 million people in the state have no access to medical services.²⁴ When students find out that corn farmers by the thousands in Mexico have been undersold by the heavily subsidized and usually genetically modified corn from the U.S.,²⁵ they come to understand why so many thousands of people whom we call aliens seek to come to the U.S. for the privilege of working our lowest-paid jobs. They come to understand how the Chiapanecos are being used as the cheapest of labor, and how goods and resources produced in the communities of Chiapas are mostly for the great cities abroad. As one student put it: "We live so well because they live so badly." At the workshop of some indigenous women weavers, one student commented that because the weavers' work is for export, we consumers are complicit in westernizing their way of life, westernizing their artistry, and subliminally saying that their way is no longer viable. Are those volunteers who help teach the women marketing and bookkeeping skills, management techniques, and business organization undermining the traditional lifestyle? Experiences like these begin the transformation process.

The Process of Transformation

Most of the students come from middle-class homes, and often from relatively traditional parents who may dream of having a wealthy, influential lawyer in the family. The pressures on those students are both strong and sublime. The conditions in Chiapas may change their perception of reality. The question is whether, ultimately, they will apply their Chiapas experience to their own lives. The goal is not only to transform the students' views about Chiapas, but also to transform their overall worldview so that the Chiapas experience can be transposed onto their American reality.

²³ Ejidos, or communities, control less and less land in Chiapas since a constitutional "reform," passed in anticipation of the onset of NAFTA, allows ejido land to be alienated. Ejido land almost invariably consists of small subsistence plots which do not ordinarily have the capacity to produce more than necessary to feed the community. Since NAFTA, commercial growers have purchased enormous amounts of land which they then convert to their own commercial uses, forcing the indigenous to either leave the land or to work it for the benefit of the large grower.

²⁴ Most statistics are thoroughly documented in *Marcos, Ya Basta! Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising* (AK Press, 2004).

²⁵ Henriques and Patel, NAFTA, Corn and Mexico's Agricultural Liberalization (2004 Report, Interhemispheric Resource Center), americas.irc-online.reports.



A village marketplace in Chiapas.

Photo courtesy of the author

Part of that transformative process can easily be seen as the students question their role in society and their goals as lawyers. A few of their comments might be illustrative. One student said: "Coming here and learning about this helps me to use my voice. It doesn't totally resolve the conflict within myself, but seeing this helps me figure it out." Another student commented: "Biopiracy²⁶ makes my blood boil. That medicine they are making from these herbs will only be sold in the U.S. and Western Europe. How can we live well in our culture and still respect other countries?" Another student, after a visit to a child-care center in Chiapas: "We are looking for something that fulfills us. I want my eyes to shine as brightly as [the child care worker's] did." In the child care center: "It makes me wonder how we raise our children." And finally, a general comment on our hosts: "They found how to serve the world within their world. We have to find how to do it in ours."

Another part of the process is seen when the student draws connections between similar realities: Chiapas and Chicago. I am reminded of the student who commented that, in Chiapas, he felt like a "walking privilege" wherever he went. I took that to mean that as we traveled throughout Chiapas, giving groups money and sometimes food, we must not forget that we have the privilege of the powerful who can dispense resources and then leave. He went on to say, however, that he felt the same way in the criminal courts of Chicago. "I'm privileged there too. My clients are people of color and mostly poor. I am the hero — being a helper is a power." Another student drew the connection to the American urban poor: "People here are fighting for rights to the land. It's exactly the same back home where people are being kicked

²⁶ The term is commonly used to describe the exploitation of the biodiversity of a region.

out of public housing.” On the sense of community: “I have a community just like they do here, but I am not doing much for them. We are not carrying our little brothers and sisters on our back. The rich in the U.S. have less community than the poor.” Another picked up on that thought: “There is no consideration of community by policy-makers. We are digging ourselves a hole. Lack of community makes social change so much more difficult.”

By the end of the trip the students feel, as one put it, “very stretched out.” Others commented: “This trip just connected all the dots for me.” Another student: “This is one of those experiences that will not hit until later. We have learned lessons about home that we don’t know yet.” Another: “My first year made me forget why I was in law school. This trip reminded me.” And finally one said: “Make sure we tell this story.”

When the reality is overwhelming and when the reasons for it are obvious, there is no rationale behind which the students can hide. There is no alternative but to start thinking systematically. What historical events have led to this situation? Why is there no respect for indigenous culture? How can a country as rich as Mexico let its resources be expropriated by the country to the north while most Mexican people have so little?²⁷

This analysis makes the students move away from known and safe ideas. It helps them understand that some problems may call for radical solutions. As public-interest lawyers, they will see that any extreme views may make them unpopular with judges and fellow members of the bar. Law schools train students to think of themselves as part of the system, part of the confraternity that can make justice work. Public-interest lawyers learn not to accept rules or laws that make no sense for the poor, and to develop a sense of challenge to the inequities of the legal system. Accepting the law as it is makes one a less effective advocate and will do nothing to reduce poverty.²⁸

After seeing a group of indigenous women talk together before answering each question, after meeting with a group of women lawyers whose job titles are nonexistent (“We are all directors”), after seeing time and time again that the Zapatistas make decisions only after community process, the students also come to understand that lawyers are not necessarily the leaders or the deciders but sometimes just the implementers. They understand that lawyers not only must work with the community they represent, but also take

²⁷ See generally Pickard, Miguel, *Plan Puebla Panama*, CIEPAC report (27 November 2006) (available widely on the internet, e.g. at www.organicconsumers.org).

²⁸ See Julie A. Su, “Making the Invisible Visible: The Garment Industry’s Dirty Laundry,” 1 *Journal of Gender, Race & Justice* 408 (1998). “I am convinced that we succeeded... because we would not accept procedures that made no sense either in our hearts or to our minds. It was an important lesson that our formal education might, at times, actually make us less effective advocates for the causes we believe in and for the people we care about.”

leadership from that community. Hopefully, the Chiapas students are learning to distinguish political from legal decisions and to understand the importance of adopting a legal strategy that mirrors the community's political goals. The notion of "community-based" lawyering must take root in immigration, economic development, and other kinds of lawyering that serve the poor.

The best way to instill these notions in the law student is to connect them to the community through clinics and volunteer programs, and also to bring the community into the law school. In my experience, law students love hearing from people who are not lawyers as much as they like hearing from those who are. Community groups associated with the homeless, the ex-offenders, the public housing residents, the victims of domestic violence, and so many others should be included in as many law school programs as possible. The more students hear of real-life social issues, the better they will feel about making a public-service career choice.

Another part of the challenge is to change the students' case-specific approach to social problems to a cause-specific approach. What legal work will advance the community or social goal? Law school teaches almost exclusively the importance of winning the particular case, to the detriment of the long-term strategies.²⁹ This is not to suggest that individuals should be sacrificed to the greater good, but simply that law students should begin thinking in more general or systematic terms. Students need to think of "development" in a context that is global or regional, not just local, and to think of "human rights," not just individual rights.

We also need to teach the importance of working with other social-service professionals in an interdisciplinary approach. The lawyer needs to understand deference to the expert judgment of the cooperating professionals, thereby relieving the lawyer of power that is probably undeserved. Understanding that these are complex and interconnected issues is key, and making those connections leads to a wider understanding of the issues.

How to sustain the Returning Student's Interest in Public Service

The natural first step in the nurturing process is to draw out the Chiapas experience so that students can deepen their understanding. Having visited the area, they should be encouraged to devise follow-up projects or reports that not only will help them to know better what they have seen, but may also help them to continue relationships with groups there. One year, DePaul students translated a funding proposal for a group of indigenous women weavers, put it into a format more familiar to American funders, and then

²⁹ See Katherine R. Kruse, "Biting Off What They Can Chew: Strategies for involving Students in Problem-Solving Beyond Individual Client Representation," 8 *Clinical Law Review* 405, 410 (2002).

helped market the idea to philanthropic organizations here. Another year, a group of students wrote an in-depth Chiapas report for a legal magazine, while others presented a report to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees on displacement communities in Chiapas. This year, as a first project, students wrote a series of brief stories for a law school newsletter. They have followed up by raising funds for the construction of community buildings in poor communities we visited. Others have organized a one-day conference on sustainable development, inviting several Chiapanecos to participate. Perhaps our greatest achievement was to have the archbishop of Chiapas, Don Samuel Ruiz Garcia, an icon in Mexico and the former mediator of the Chiapas conflict, invited to DePaul for a three-day visit. In helping Chiapas-program veterans to educate others about Chiapas, there is hopefully a residual effect of helping them to understand the role of lawyer as teacher, organizer and, in this case, reporter. Modest ambitions will lead to something of impact that will stamp the experience more deeply in the students' consciousness.

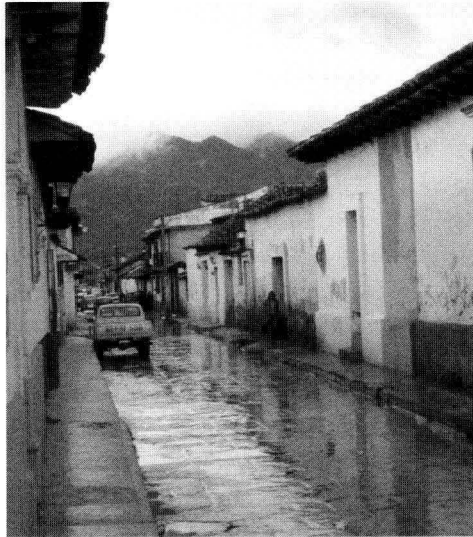
On a more long-term basis, the law school experience can be adjusted. A natural sequel for the Chiapas student, for example, would be a formal or volunteer program, offering the chance to work in the Chicago immigrant community where one sees first-hand the end of the migration line. Also impressive are the various hurricane relief efforts which show students how failed infrastructure, lack of a social-service network, and racial discrimination exist here in the U.S. just as in Chiapas. Our ability to maintain their interest may affect fundamental career decisions.

Law schools also must develop curricula and classroom materials that teach about poverty. We need courses that force students to ask themselves: how does this law help disadvantaged communities? We must help students see their legal work as "justice work," meaning that the result of the case studied is meaningless until its application is understood. This approach helps them analyze what kind of work can directly or indirectly address some aspect of the overall problem.

The curriculum also needs more "law and society" courses that expose students to the ways in which non-lawyers view the law. Programs should be created that cooperate with other schools in the university, particularly those teaching social work or working for economic reform. Students themselves should be turned into advocates for change in law school, demanding more courses relevant to social issues and seeking to expand clinical programs oriented toward the public interest.

In a non-curricular vein, much isolation can be alleviated by creating a community within the law school and the university in which Chiapas-program veterans, and their public-spirited colleagues, do not feel

marginalized. At DePaul, for example, there is the Center for Public Interest Law, whose broad action program of conferences, speakers' panels, receptions, volunteer programs, and the like helps law students build a strong foundation with each other and offers them a place to not only critique law school but also share ideas and plans. Students may also learn to work collectively on their projects and, beyond that, to connect with social movements outside the school. As one Chiapas veteran put it: "This program is part of my community. Your thoughts connect me to you. You need community to get through law school."



A narrow village street in Chiapas.
Photo courtesy of the author

What Institutional Changes Will Help Nurture the Students' Commitment to Fight Poverty?

The ultimate desired outcome of the Chiapas program is to reduce poverty. In this context, the principal strategy is to encourage and enable all its students to pursue a legal career committed to the service of the poor and underprivileged. Lawyers can be a very potent ally in helping the poor to gain control of the forces which oppress them and begin serious work to end poverty.

The question becomes how to place those students in jobs working for the poor without requiring them to take vows of poverty. Public-interest lawyers who work for poverty agencies such as legal aid are paid far less than similarly-situated colleagues in commercial firms. Given the typical gradu-

ate's overwhelming law-school and undergraduate debt,³⁰ the temptation to enter the corporate legal world is strong. Congress has most recently reacted to this problem with the passage of a loan forgiveness program that, after ten years of public-interest service, will wipe out any remaining debt.³¹ Various governmental agencies operate their own internal loan forgiveness programs.³² Law schools, as well, need to pursue the creation or expansion of loan forgiveness as a primary goal of their fund-raising campaigns. At DePaul, reunion classes are urged to consider loan forgiveness program contributions for their class gift. A special faculty, staff, and student committee should be created to publicize and solicit donations for the program. There are any number of fund-raising possibilities which, if successful, could result in a yearly contribution to each public-service lawyer/alumnus in need.

Public service must also be high on the agenda of other law school programs. There may be other centers or programs that should develop the public-service aspects of their offerings. The law school administration needs also to have public service integrated into its programs. For example, the career services/placement office should be encouraged to focus as much on public service as it does on corporate or business law. Communication centers within the law school should feature public-service events as prominently as their other events. Graduation planners should consider a distinguished public servant as the principal speaker. The possibilities are as varied as they are numerous.

Law school's also need to expand their institutional commitment to continue and expand programs like Chiapas. At DePaul the undergraduate school places particular emphasis on "community-based service learning,"³³ and that commitment needs to extend much more substantially to the College of Law, whose programs tend not to focus on poverty and do not offer the hands-on experience of the Chiapas program. Programs such as spring break in New Orleans or representation of people at deportation hearings in Harlingen, Texas, should be expanded. The law school, in cooperation with

³⁰ Law students today graduate with debt for law school alone averaging between \$80,000 and \$100,000, depending on a number of variables. It is not at all rare for a student to graduate with close to \$200,000 in debt from both law school and undergraduate school. The median entry level salary for civil legal services jobs is \$36,000. On a ten-year repayment schedule, debt payments in this situation will total more than \$1,000 per month, leaving just over \$1,000 for living expenses. The first year associate at a big firm will typically be paid more for the first-year than a legal-services lawyer at the top of the pay scale. "Financing the Future: Responses to the Rising Debt of Law Students," *Report by Equal Justice Works* (2006). At: www.equaljusticeworks.org.

³¹ The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (P.L.110-84).

³² State agencies in numerous states operate state loan forgiveness programs. See www.abanet.org/legalervices/LRAP.

³³ The Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning. See cbsl.depaul.edu.

the undergraduate school, should provide financial and in-kind resources rather than forcing dependence totally on external funders.

It is important for public-interest-minded faculty at university law schools to reach out to other faculty in other disciplines, who can make important contributions to a course syllabus. At DePaul a "Chiapas working group" has been formed to assist the two existing Chiapas programs and broaden the base of Chiapas work throughout the university. Special-interest centers such as Latino studies can help expose students and institutionalize public-interest programs. If programs like Chiapas are credit-bearing (the DePaul program carries two credit hours in the law school), then the university will benefit from the tuition stream generated and will be more likely to funnel resources into the program. Building some support for the program among alumni and organizations that benefit from it will also encourage the university to continue its support.

Outside the university, the organized bar must show its increased commitment to pro bono work. Public-service advocates in the university must build alliances with bar organizations and encourage them to take an active role in supporting public-service work by students. Law firms and corporations must also see an obligation to support law schools' efforts to catch students early in their studies and lead them to public-service careers. Waiting until the students become lawyers is waiting too long. Many thousands will have abandoned their public-service goals if they don't see early on that practicing lawyers see public service as an honored and attractive career path.

Though the goal of these strategies is to reduce poverty and not to sanctify the lawyers who do the work, public-service lawyers should be honored as much as their colleagues. The more law students hear of lawyers who have successfully navigated the pitfalls of public-interest lawyering, the more role models they will have and the deeper the impression those role models will make.