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Boston College Law School

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BCLS Receives NAPIL Fellowship

4/26/01--Boston College Law School recent graduate Beth Werlin ('00) has been selected to receive the prestigious NAPIL fellowship, which encourages the pursuit of public interest careers. She is currently working for the Department of Justice in a one-year clerkship at the Executive Office of Immigration Review in the Boston office, and will begin her fellowship next September, working at the Legal Action Center of the American Immigration Law Foundation (AILF).

"I am very happy and honored that NAPIL has selected me for a fellowship," Werlin said. "Until just last month, I didn't know whether I would ever have the opportunity to test the legal theories proposed in my student note. This fellowship will allow me to do so."

Werlin's student note, "Renewing the Call: Immigrants' Right to Appointed Counsel in Deportation Proceedings," was published in the Spring 2000 edition of the BCLS Third World Law Journal. In her note, she argued that under the Due Process clause, legal permanent residents have a right to appointed counsel in removal proceedings. And in working for AILF under the NAPIL Fellowship, she will concentrate her efforts primarily on the Constitutional Right to Appointed Counsel Project, and will work toward establishing the goals set out in her note. The first group of non-citizens to be addressed by this Project, she says, are those who have been granted asylum by an immigration judge, but whose cases have been appealed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

"Counsel makes a significant difference in the outcome of a non-citizen's immigration case," Werlin says. "For non-citizens facing removal from the United States, the stakes are very high, especially for those who fled their home countries in fear of their lives. I am cautiously optimistic that appointed counsel can become a reality for some non-citizens in immigration proceedings."

The Fellowships for Equal Justice Program was founded in 1992 by the National Association for Public Interest Law to provide salary and loan repayment assistance to lawyers who advocate on behalf of individuals, groups, or interests that are not adequately represented by the civil legal system. The duration for the program is for two years. The Fellowship accepts applications from experienced as well as recent law school graduates.