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Bella Pori '21 Receives 2021 Paris Baldacci Scholarship for Outstanding Student Work on LGBT Rights



Bella Pori '21 has been selected as the recipient of the 2021 Paris Baldacci Scholarship for Outstanding Student Work on LGBT Rights. This scholarship was created in honor of Professor Paris Baldacci, beloved professor emeritus who died on September 6, 2020. During his lifetime, he was always present during the ceremony when the recipient received the scholarship.

Pori has been an active member of the Human Rights and Atrocity Prevention Clinic at Cardozo, in addition to serving as a research assistant for Professor Kate Shaw. Pori received her B.A. from Barnard College in 2015 and spent several years before law school in New York politics working for Assemblymen Phil Goldfeder and Walter Mosely, and during law school, as an intern at the Center for Reproductive Rights. "I'm honored to have been awarded the Paris Baldacci scholarship. Professor Baldacci brought so much to Cardozo through both his work as a clinical professor and by being a positive openly gay role model for the students he taught and those he did not. I know that my ability to be openly gay and to work on LGBTQ+ rights issues is due in part to him and other courageous LGBTQ+ people, and I hope to someday contribute to the wonderful legacy Professor Baldacci and others have left."

The Baldacci Scholarship is awarded each year by a committee chaired by Professor Ed Stein, Director of the Gertrud Mainzer Program in Family Law, Policy and Bioethics. “The committee was especially impressed with Bella’s combination of writing projects on LGBT-related topics and her work on reproductive justice,” said Professor Stein. “In particular, we were impressed with the research she has conducted on the AIDS epidemic, producing a college curriculum that focuses on the federal government’s failed response to the health crisis between 1982 and 1985.”

Professor Stein noted that Pori wrote an impressive paper on “queer children of queer parents” for one of her classes. She is currently writing an article with the thesis, she said, “that the Motion Picture Production Code of the early 20th century impacted which cases were chosen by the LGBTQ+ rights movement as test cases at the Supreme Court, because decades of queer death in the movies made society, and the justices, comfortable only with couples where one member was dead.”

Stein praised her writing and her public service work (with the Center for Reproductive Rights and the ACLU) on expanding access to abortion as being connected to reproductive justice more generally and relevant to expanding and ensuring rights for LGBTQ+ people.

About the Baldacci Scholarship:

The Baldacci Scholarship was created in honor of Professor Paris Baldacci who taught Cardozo from 1991 until 2015, and who pioneered new programs for housingrights and gay rights a a Clinical Professor of Law. Professor Baldacci was a supervising attorney in the Bet Tzedek Civil Litigation Clinic and established a Housing Rights Clinic and the LGBT Litigation and Leadership Practicum, which he directed until he retired in 2015.

Previous award recipients include: Eugenia Fowlkes '20, currently Assistant Corporation Counsel, New York City Law Department (not yet admitted); Eva “Chava” Thomas '19, Associate, A.Y. Strauss, LLC; Daniel Sinasohn '18, Attorney Advisor, U.S. Small Business Administration – Office of Disaster Assistance; Sam Stanton '17, Policy Advisor at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs; Elias Shebar '16, Attorney, Office of the Cook County Public Guardian; Francesca Acocella '16, Director of Student Life, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law; and Sanam Assil '15, Associate, Tannenbaum Helpern Syracuse & Hirschtritt LLP.