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## Cardozo Law School Launches Center for Visual Advocacy and Educational Website for Filmmakers



Cardozo Law School has launched the **Center for Visual Advocacy (CVA)**. The CVA, under the leadership of Professor Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin, will, among other activities and outreach, host a new educational website for filmmakers, providing practical legal information to help these visual artists understand and protect their rights and avoid common and costly legal missteps. The law school's unique Indie Film Clinic will be renamed the Filmmakers Legal Clinic (FLC) and will come under the umbrella of the Center for Visual Advocacy. The clinic's name change reflects its transition to providing direct legal services to independent filmmakers creating films with social justice themes and impacts.

The Center for Visual Advocacy will serve at the intersection of law, visual arts, media and social justice—pioneering this new field. The CVA will be the law school's hub for students, academics, and practitioners interested in this important intersection to work together to bring about meaningful social change via visual advocacy. The CVA will host community events such legal trainings for artists, journalists, and advocates and an annual conference as a film series spotlighting impactful films.

Cardozo launched its clinic for independent filmmakers in 2011 in order to provide students with a solid foundation in transactional legal skills in the field, as well as to provide ongoing support and expertise for independent filmmakers who are vital to keeping New York City as a center of independent film production. The success of the clinic can be seen in the support it provides to up to 30 filmmakers each year, and the many programs it runs with its community partners and film festivals.

In recent years, under the leadership of Director Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin, the clinic began to focus exclusively on films telling new stories and pursuing social justice aims, with a particular focus on equity and inclusion. This shift to visual advocacy reflects the law school's tradition of pursuing justice, equity and inclusion—and marries it with the clinic's focus on helping independent filmmakers. For a representative example, students recently provided legal services for Hurriyah Muhammad and Ekwa Msangi's film, *Farewell Amor*, which is about an immigrant family from Africa reunited in the United States after 17 years of separation. The film went on to win the Sundance Institute/Amazon Studios Producers Award for Narrative Feature Producer at the Sundance Film Festival in 2020 and opened in theatrical release earlier this month.

“No two clients are the same,” says Greenberg-Kobrin, of the clinic's work. “We're empowering our incredibly talented clients to bring about positive societal change through their artistic vision. The clinic provides a full complement of transactional and intellectual property legal services, including advice on copyright law and fair use, licensing questions, legal entity formation, financing and investor issues, employment questions, acquiring and assigning of rights, distribution, and, increasingly, First Amendment issues.” When relevant, students, practicing under Greenberg-Kobrin's license, negotiate for their clients with in-house attorneys at major media companies. “We have a precious limited resource, which is pro bono legal services,” says Greenberg-Kobrin. “We want to be very careful about how we allocate that resource—in a way that will benefit as many people as possible, in as thoughtful a way as possible.”

The clinic has been generously supported by the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund since its early years. This year the clinic received additional funding through the Legal Clinic Fund and the Miranda Family Fund. The Legal Clinic Fund is a collaborative fund to support the growth and sustainability of legal clinics across the United States that seek to advance and defend first amendment rights, media freedom, and transparency in their communities and nationally. The Fund is generously supported by The Abrams Foundation, Democracy Fund, Heising-Simons Foundation, and The Klarman Family Foundation. The Miami Foundation serves as fiscal sponsor for the Fund. The Miranda Family Fund's focus includes creating opportunities for artists of color, promoting diverse

representation in all levels of government, increasing/protecting reproductive rights, and building resilient systems in Puerto Rico.

FLC's educational website is expected to launch in the spring of 2021 with detailed legal information for filmmakers and other visual artists to learn about the specific legal issues they will face as they pursue creative ideas, bring films to completion, and seek distribution. The website will give filmmakers and video journalists a foundational education in language accessible to non-lawyers, so that they will know their rights, protect themselves, ask the right questions, and, ultimately, get these important films made and distributed. The site will include discussions about copyright law and the fair use doctrine; how to finance a film; when and how to create a legal entity; contract terms and drafting; negotiation techniques; and much more. The website will also provide model contracts for certain topics: Investor Agreement; Music Licensing Agreement; Work Made for Hire Agreement; Copyright Assignment; and more.

"Professor Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin has done an outstanding job teaching our students how to become transactional lawyers in a dynamic and fast-moving field of law, while also engaging in social justice issues," said Dean Melanie Leslie. "The Center for Visual Advocacy will continue to grow and expand on our renowned IP offerings; it sits at the intersection of IP, mediation, clinical and transactional areas which can serve generations of students to come."

Cardozo School of Law is ranked #13 in intellectual property law by U.S. News & World Report and is consistently recognized as a leader in intellectual property and information law. Cardozo's IP program offers theory and practical training to students from all backgrounds who thrive on developing answers that meet current legal problems. The school's focus on emerging technology, data, privacy, fashion, and entertainment law demonstrates its commitment to remain at the forefront of legal issues that arise as innovation continues to shape the intellectual property world. The Center for Visual Advocacy is a welcome addition to this strong tradition.

**Centers, clinics, and programs at Cardozo include:**

- The FAME Center for Fashion, Arts, Media, and Entertainment Law
- The Tech Startup Clinic
- Cardozo-Google Patent Diversity Project
- The Cardozo Data Law Initiative (CDLI)
- The Filmmakers Legal Clinic (FLC)
- The Center for Visual Advocacy