The American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty and Section of Individual Rights & Responsibilities present

The War on Poverty: Is Every Lawyer a Soldier, or Are We Tilting at Windmills?

Monday, July 28, 2014 | 2:00 - 4:00pm
American Bar Association | John Marshall Conference Room
1050 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 5th Floor | Washington, DC 20036

Fifty years after President Johnson declared the U.S. war on poverty, millions of Americans continue to face homelessness, hunger, and economic insecurity at unacceptable rates despite a continued commitment to address it. Armed with 50 years of data, voices from both sides of the political spectrum have acknowledged successes and failures. Lessons have been learned, yet poverty remains as we continue to debate the utility of entitlement programs and other federally funded support. Does America need another war on poverty? Can we end poverty with the existing safety net, or should we focus energy on promoting economic security through education, job opportunities, entrepreneurship and increased wages? As striking economic inequality continues to increase, how can we foster the development of a more equitable economy—one that produces good jobs and full employment, upgrades the education and skills of our increasingly diverse workforce, and creates opportunities for all people to participate, prosper and reach their full potential? While there seems to be consensus that education is one critical way to lift an individual (and family) out of poverty, can education alone get the job done? Critics have highlighted less than stellar outcomes from many federally funded programs and have called for more personal responsibility regarding education, work, marriage, and child bearing—what measures should be employed to achieve better outcomes, and what is the role of government and advocates? And more specifically: what is the role of lawyers, law schools and the organized bar in addressing poverty?

This program will feature panelists with diverse political beliefs debating these issues and discussing specific action steps for lawyers, advocates, and policymakers.
AGENDA

Welcome and Opening Remarks:

**Martha Bergmark, Director, Voices for Civil Justice; Member, Commission on Homelessness & Poverty**  
Over three decades, Martha Bergmark has founded and/or led several initiatives for equal justice under law, both at the national level in Washington, DC and in Mississippi, where she grew up. In 2003, Bergmark was named the Stern Family Fund’s Public Interest Pioneer. This honor came with a $200,000 grant to launch the Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ), which she led until 2013. She still serves as a board member and senior counsel. Before that, Bergmark spent 15 years as an advocate for equal justice under the law in Washington, DC. She served tenures as president and executive vice president of the Legal Services Corporation, which administers federal funding for legal aid programs. She was also senior vice president for programs at the National Legal Aid & Defender Association, where she directed the Project for the Future of Equal Justice (a joint initiative with the Center for Law and Social Policy). Bergmark began her legal career practicing civil rights and poverty law for 14 years in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. There she was the founding executive director of Southeast Mississippi Legal Services (now Mississippi Center for Legal Services). Bergmark is a former Reginald Heber Smith Fellow and the 1990 recipient of the Kutak-Dodds Prize for her civil rights and legal aid work in her home state of Mississippi. She is a magna cum laude graduate of Oberlin College, earned her law degree cum laude at the University of Michigan Law School and holds honorary degrees from Oberlin College and Millsaps College.

Speakers:

**Sister Simone Campbell, Executive Director, NETWORK**  
A religious leader, attorney and poet with extensive experience in public policy and advocacy for systemic change, Sister Simone Campbell lobbies on issues of peace and inequality. The course highlights the role of lawyers in social movements and the impact of those movements on the development of constitutional law, interrogating the ways in which social movements challenge and/or re-enforce inequality and stratification. Simone has often been featured in the national and international media, including recent appearances on 60 Minutes, The Colbert Report, and The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. She has received numerous awards, including a “Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Award” and the "Defender of Democracy Award" from the international Parliamentarians for Global Action. In addition, she has been the keynote or featured speaker at numerous large gatherings, including the 2012 Democratic National Convention. Prior to coming to NETWORK, Simone served as the Executive Director of JERICHO, the California interfaith public policy organization that works like NETWORK to protect the interests of people living in poverty. Before JERICHO, Simone served as the general director of her religious community, the Sisters of Social Service. She was the leader of her Sisters in the United States, Mexico, Taiwan and the Philippines. In 1978, Simone founded and served for 18 years as the lead attorney for the Community Law Center in Oakland, California. She served the family law and probate needs of the working poor of her county. She is also the author of A Nun on the Bus: How All of Us Can Create Hope, Change, and Community, published in April 2014 by HarperCollins.

**Anthony Cook, Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law Center**  
A magna cum laude graduate of Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of International and Public Policy, Professor Cook graduated from the Yale Law School and practiced venture capital and corporate law. He has completed two post-graduate fellowships, the first in Ethics and the Professions at the Kennedy School of Government and the second in Religion and Public Values at the Harvard Divinity School. He has taught courses in community economic development and corporate law and presently teaches a Practicum on Law and Entrepreneurship, advising social enterprises, early stage, and scaling ventures on a range of legal and business issues. He also teaches a constitutional law course, Democracy & Coercion, which explores the relationship between constitutional law and social stratification & inequality. The course highlights the role of lawyers in social movements and the impact of those movements on the development of constitutional law, interrogating the ways in which social movements challenge and/or re-enforce inequality and stratification. Professor Cook’s scholarship has explored the relationship between progressive religious theology and progressive politics in America. His book, The Least of These: Race, Law and Religion in American Culture,
explores the relevance of the social gospel and Dr. Martin Luther King's conception of the Beloved Community for race, class and cultural divides in American Society. For his work as a scholar and community activist who has worked with various grassroots and faith-based initiatives on community empowerment and economic development projects, the American Bar Association honored Professor Cook as One of 21 Lawyers Leading America into the 21st Century, citing his "unique synergy of action and thought."

**Peter Edelman, Faculty Director, Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy, Georgetown University Law Center**

Peter Edelman is a Professor of Law at Georgetown Law Center and Faculty Co-Director of the Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality and Public Policy. On the faculty since 1982, he has also served in all three branches of government and at the state level as well, beginning with the Kennedy Administration when he served as a law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldberg and then as Special Assistant to Assistant Attorney General John Douglas in the Civil Division of the Department of Justice. He went on to be a Legislative Assistant to Senator Robert F. Kennedy and later on was Issues Director for Senator Edward Kennedy's 1980 Presidential campaign. He has also served as Vice President of the University of Massachusetts and Director of the New York State Division of Youth. During President Clinton's first term he was Counselor to HHS Secretary Donna Shalala and then Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. He is currently Chair of the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission and of the National Center for Youth Law. Mr. Edelman’s recent book, *So Rich, So Poor: Why It’s So Hard to End Poverty in America*, was published by The New Press in the spring of 2012.

**Johnathan Smith, Assistant Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.**

Johnathan Smith joined LDF’s staff as Assistant Counsel in the Economic Justice Group in October 2010. In that capacity, Johnathan engages in litigation, public policy, and public education to ensure equal access to economic opportunity for all Americans. Johnathan has been involved in high-impact, racial justice advocacy in a wide variety of civil rights issues, including employment, housing, fair lending, and environmental justice. He is a member of LDF’s litigation team in *Davis v. City of New York*, a class action challenge to the NYPD’s discriminatory trespass enforcement practices, including stop-and-frisk, in public housing residences. While at LDF, Johnathan has also worked on *Scott v. Schedler*, a challenge under the National Voter Registration Act to Louisiana’s failure to provide voter registration opportunity to its most vulnerable residents. Johnathan speaks and writes regularly on economic justice issues and other civil rights matters. He is the author of *Banning the Box but Keeping the Discrimination?: Disparate Impact and Employers’ Overreliance on Criminal Background Checks*, 49 Harv. C.R.-C.L. L. Rev. (2014). Additionally, he has offered testimony and provided written comments to legislative and administrative bodies on civil rights issues. Prior to joining LDF, Johnathan spent two years as a litigation associate in the New York offices of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP, where he represented clients in a variety of complex civil litigation matters and was an NAACP LDF fellow. Johnathan also previously served as a law clerk to the Honorable Carl E. Stewart on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Johnathan graduated cum laude from NYU School of Law, where he was a Root-Tilden-Kern public interest scholar and an editor of the *Review of Law and Social Change*. Johnathan graduated cum laude from Harvard College with a degree in Sociology and African-American Studies and also holds an M.Ed. in education policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.
Thomas M. Susman, Director, ABA Governmental Affairs Office

Thomas M. Susman became the Director of the Governmental Affairs Office of the American Bar Association in May 2008 and ABA Associate Executive Director, Washington Office, in February 2010. The Governmental Affairs Office serves as the focal point for the Association’s advocacy efforts before Congress, the Executive Branch, and other governmental entities on diverse issues of importance to the legal profession.

Prior to joining the ABA in 2008, he was a partner in the Washington Office of Ropes & Gray LLP for over 25 years. There his work included counseling, litigation, and lobbying on a wide range of regulatory, antitrust, lobbying, ethics, and information law issues. He handled legislative matters on behalf of both large and small clients – businesses, trade associations, and nonprofit organizations – in a variety of industries. He was active in seeking enactment of legislation, in obtaining appropriations for specific projects, in blocking or amending legislative proposals, and in counseling targets of congressional investigations.

Before joining Ropes & Gray, he served on Capitol Hill for over 11 years. He was Chief Counsel to the Senate Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure and General Counsel to the Antitrust Subcommittee and to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

He is a nationally recognized expert on lobbying and freedom of information. He co-edits the American Bar Association’s *Lobbying Manual*; served as an adjunct professor on lobbying at The American University’s Washington College of Law; and chairs the Ethics Committee of the American League of Lobbyists. His most recent articles on the subject address lobbying reform, reciprocity, contingent fee lobbying, and the proper role of campaign contributions in lobbying. He has also written, taught, and lectured on transparency and access to government information; he received the American Library Association’s “Champion of Public Access” award in 2009 and the Collaboration on Government Secrecy’s “Robert Vaughn FOIA Legend” award in 2008, and is founder and president of the D.C. Open Government Coalition.

Mr. Susman previously served in the ABA’s House of Delegates and on its Board of Governors. He is a member of the American Law Institute, was Chairman of the National Judicial College Board, and was president of the District of Columbia Public Library Foundation. He is a graduate of Yale University and received his J.D. from the University of Texas Law School, where he was editor-in-chief of the *Texas Law Review*. 