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Thalia Gonzalez

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A QUIET REVOLUTION: MINDFULNESS, REBELLIOUS LAWYERING, AND COMMUNITY PRACTICE

THALIA GONZÁLEZ*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, contemplative practices and mindfulness have garnered increasing mainstream attention. Whether studied in academic journals,¹ presented in media publications, such as

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* Thalia González is a 2016–2017 Visiting Researcher at Georgetown University Law Center. I wish to acknowledge all the students who contributed their voices to this Article. I am truly grateful for your honesty, wisdom, and commitment to the movement. I wish to thank the editors of the California Western Law Review for their work during the editorial process.

¹ See infra notes 11, 16, 19, 27–28.
Atlantic,\textsuperscript{2} the New York Times,\textsuperscript{3} and the Huffington Post,\textsuperscript{4} or reviewed in professional organization publications, including Harvard Business Review,\textsuperscript{5} Psychology Today,\textsuperscript{6} American Bar Association Journal,\textsuperscript{7} Idaho State Bar’s The Advocate,\textsuperscript{8} Florida Bar Journal,\textsuperscript{9} and Texas Bar Journal,\textsuperscript{10} the growing trend is difficult to ignore.\textsuperscript{11} But, much of this


11. The contemplative or mindful lawyering movement is represented as a diverse set of practices with secular and spiritual foundations, including such modalities as mindfulness meditation, mindful listening, mindful walking, Qigong, reflective inquiry, visualization, yoga, and Tai Chi Chu’an. \textit{See}, e.g., Dennis S. Voorhes, \textit{The Lawyer’s Mind: An Opportunity for Balance}, 59 ADVOC. (IDAHO) 14, 15 (Sept. 2016); \textit{see also} The Tree of Contemplative Practices, CTR. FOR CONTEMPLATIVE MIND IN SOC’Y, http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree (last visited Dec. 4, 2016) (depicting the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s seven different categories of contemplative practices). While characterized in this
discussion has centered on the positive benefits and outcomes for the individuals, leaving open a large and complex set of questions for those seeking to engage in social change work. For example, in the practice of public interest and social justice lawyering, how can mindfulness become a revolutionary force that targets oppressive systems? What does the legal practice of a quiet revolutionary look like? What is the relationship between individual transformation and collective liberation?12

While the first wave of the mindfulness movement can be traced back to 1989,13 it did not garner mainstream academic attention until 2002, when the Harvard Negotiation Law Review hosted a symposium on mindfulness meditation and alternative dispute resolution. The journal published a range of articles, including Leonard Riskin's The Contemplative Lawyer: On the Potential Contributions of Mindfulness to the Practice of Law (2002).


13. Magee, supra note 11, at 548.
Meditation to Law Students, Lawyers, and Their Clients, which not only placed mindfulness squarely within legal education, but also associated meditation with a traditional area of practice—alternative dispute resolution. Novel at the time, Riskin offered mindfulness meditation as essential to developing the personal and professional skills needed for a sustained and effective legal practice. Since then, Riskin and others have catalyzed scholarly and professional attention into what is now broadly characterized as mindful legal practice.

14. Leonard L. Riskin, The Contemplative Lawyer: On the Potential Contributions of Mindfulness Meditation to Law Students, Lawyers, and Their Clients, 7 Harv. Negot. L. Rev. 1, 8 (2002) (focusing on how mindfulness “can help law students and lawyers address two related problems that many of them face. The first concerns high levels of unhappiness, stress, and depression among lawyers and law students. The second concerns the tendency of some lawyers to miss opportunities to provide the most appropriate service to some clients.”).

15. Id. at 45-60. Riskin draws on Buddhism and mindfulness meditation as the modality by which to achieve greater satisfaction in one’s legal practice and more effectively serve the diverse needs of clients. Id. at 27.


17. See, e.g., supra notes 7–10; see also infra note 18.

Recognizing the study and integration of contemplative practices outside the legal academy, scholars have drawn upon research across multiple disciplines to expose and expand the dimensions of mindfulness within legal education. In addition to the positive individual emotional and cognitive experiences gained by mindfulness, a growing body of work has considered how contemplative pedagogy can aid the development of skills necessary to engage in critical self-reflection, produce deliberate and shared knowledge, and connect to historical and contemporary realities of power and privilege. As Beth

67 BENCH & B. MINN. 26 (Mar. 2010). See also Jenna Cho, Why Every Lawyer Should Be Practicing Mindfulness (Part I), ABOVE THE LAW (Apr. 20, 2015), http://abovethelaw.com/2015/04/why-every-lawyer-should-be-practicing-mindfulness-part-i/ ("The practice of mindfulness is the practice of taking our internal temperature and noticing how we are feeling—physically, emotionally, psychologically—and making small course adjustments . . ."); Rhonda V. Magee, Life experience and cognitive science deepen the case for mindfulness in the law, A.B.A J. (Jan. 1, 2016), http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/experience_and_cognitive_science_deepen_the_case_for_mindfulness_in_the_law ("Long considered a fringe notion, mindfulness—the simple yet profound and often difficult practice of bringing awareness to the present—has become something of 'a thing.'"); Martha Neil, Goodbye Rambo, Hello 'Mindfulness': More Lawyers Embrace Zen-Inspired Techniques, A.B.A J. (June 19, 2015), http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/goodbye_rambo_hello_mindfulness_more_lawyers_embrace_zen_inspired_technique ("[T]he mindfulness movement seeks to reduce the legal profession's Rambo-like characteristics, the Wall Street Journal (sub. req.) reports. Judi Cohen, whose Warrior One firm provides mindfulness coaching, says one exercise involves putting participants in pairs. They are to have a conversation, but are instructed to do so not only without interrupting but without thinking about retorting until the other person finishes a thought. If possible, they should also try not to mentally criticize each other."); Mindfulness and the Law, MINDFUL LAWYER, http://themindfullawyer.com (last visited Aug. 15, 2016) ("[M]indfulness—paying attention to life in the present moment."); The Law of Mindfulness, MINDFUL (August 26, 2010), http://www.mindful.org/the-law-of-mindfulness/ ("Rogers'[s] program, Jurisight, uses legal language and thinking to express mindfulness principles."); Gillespie, supra note 7.

Berila argues, the integration of mindfulness in higher education is essential when addressing diversity and oppression:

These disciplines teach their subject matter not just as objects of study, but also as social systems in which we all participate in various ways. If students are to really reflect on their roles in these systems, they need to cultivate the tools for recognizing and understanding their internal and external reactions to that realization.20

Similarly, Roxanne Ng has posited that embodied learning, through acknowledging interconnection between mind, body, emotion, and spirit in the construction of knowledge, is essential to anti-oppressive pedagogy.21 For Ng this dissolves the “boundaries between the self and collectivity, between the individual and the system.”22 Thus, mindfulness challenges the development of not only the knowledge necessary to address the legal issue(s) presented by a client, but also the awareness to deconstruct issues of power, privilege, inequality, and subordination with an increasingly intersectional view of how social categories and constructions replicate and perpetuate subordination. Instead of simply looking at one experience or relationship, mindful law students (and lawyers) aim to create alternate structures and relationships that promote equality and inclusion, resist subordination, foster self-expression and self-determination, respect the intelligence and agency of individuals and communities, and ground their legal practice in actions centered on dignity and respect. Highlighting the complex and inherent dynamics of power embedded in practice begins to address Gary Bellow’s critique of the profession: “[T]he practice of law always involves exercising power. . . . Social vision is part of the operating ethos of self-conscious law practice. The fact that most law

22. Id.
practice is not done self-consciously is simply a function of the degree to which most law practice serves the status quo."\(^{23}\)

While considerable early pedagogical work was done under the radar,\(^ {24}\) scholars and practitioners have increasingly argued the need to develop and integrate contemplative practice inside and outside the classroom.\(^ {25}\) Over time, a quiet revolution of mindfulness—as a pedagogy and a practice—has gained significant recognition.\(^ {26}\) But a look at the broader movement reveals a continued emphasis on the individual, with little focus on how such practices can be integrated into experiential learning and clinical legal practice.\(^ {27}\) This has created a

\[^{23}\text{Gary Bellow, Steady Work: A Practitioner’s Reflections on Political Lawyering, 31 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 297, 301 (1996).}\]

\[^{24}\text{See Magee, supra note 11, at 538 (noting that the Carnegie Report was a catalyst for increased attention on contemplative practices).}\]

\[^{25}\text{See Rogers, The Role of Mindfulness, supra note 19, at 388-89.}\]

\[^{26}\text{See SCOTT ROGERS, MINDFULNESS FOR LAW STUDENTS: USING THE POWER OF MINDFUL AWARENESS TO ACHIEVE BALANCE AND SUCCESS IN LAW SCHOOL (2009); see also Mindfulness and the Law Student, MINDFUL LAW STUDENT, http://themindfullawstudent.com (last visited Sept. 5, 2016). In 2015, more than 40 law schools offered courses in contemplative or mindfulness practices. Student mindfulness groups have developed at schools such as Columbia Law School, Yale Law School, Berkeley Law, University of San Francisco Law, Miami Law, University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law, Vanderbilt Law, Golden Gate Law School, and Florida Law. Additionally, major national conferences on mindfulness in law or legal education have taken place at Harvard Law School and at the University of California - Berkeley. See Mindfulness in Law Program, MIAMI LAW, http://www.miamimindfulness.org/Students/2012%20mindful%20law%20student%20conference/index.html (last visited Dec. 19, 2016); see also Riskin, supra note 14, at 45-60 (describing the potential benefits of mindfulness mediation across diverse setting, such as law firms and law schools); Riskin & Wohl, supra note 11, at 136; The Law of Mindfulness, supra note 18.}\]

\[^{27}\text{While some scholars have refused to accept this narrower construction, the dominant scholarly discourse has not reflected their voices or explored these connections. See Anthony V. Alfieri, Educating Lawyers for Community, 2012 WIS. L. REV. 115, 130-39 (2012) (discussing a pedagogy of community and public citizenship grounded in mindfulness and spirituality principles in an outcome-based, rotation curricular model of legal education); Douglas Codiga, Reflections on the Potential Growth of Mindfulness Meditation in the Law, 7 HARV. NEGOT. L. REV. 109, 110, 122-23 (2002) (mindfulness meditation offers lawyers a method for cultivating deeper insights that have the “potential to connect the day-to-day work of lawyering with insights that provide lasting meaning into perennial questions about human existence”); see also Angela Harris & Stephanie Wildman, Toward Lawyering}\]
literary void for both theoretical and practical conceptions of mindful lawyering aimed at what Angela Harris, Margareta Lin, and Jeff Selbin described as “more than offer[ing] benefits to an individual practitioner.” This leaves open considerable opportunities for faculty to adopt, adapt, and explore contemplative practices across the curriculum to expand the meaning of practicing law given contemporary social, political, and legal realities. As Betty Hung argues,

By working harder and more creatively than the forces that we are up against, we can shift power to marginalized communities with the overarching hope that the end result will be a more fair and equal society where we learn to value the humanity of each and every person so that no one is marginalized or voiceless.

While this Article focuses on experiential learning and clinical education, the integration of mindfulness should not be limited to one area of the curriculum. The increasing pressures faced by law students during school and after graduation underscore the academy’s need to consider legal training aimed at connecting critical practice skills with a method for cultivating deeper insights that “touch upon the whole lawyer’s life.” From this broader stance, the integration of contemplative practices into clinical and experiential legal education


29. This is particularly true as contemplative practices help to define and develop the skills, judgment, and values that future lawyers need to fulfill responsibilities to clients and society.


31. Codiga, supra note 27, at 110.
promotes "more ethical conduct, . . . more compassionate and empathic judgment, social justice, and transform[s] the world in support of the more altruistic tendencies with human nature." It further "provide[s] a bridge to deep reconsideration of how to more meaningfully, ethically, and effectively [use] law in service to clients and community." As Harris, Lin, and Selbin reflect,

Through the practice of mindfulness, however, I have grown in my ability to operate more compassionately, reflectively, and in better alignment with what I know to have integrity. These seeds enable me to reflect upon my mistakes, apologize when needed, be more compassionate to the mistakes of others, and better serve as a mindful worker in Oakland's economic justice movement.

This Article proceeds in three parts. First, it briefly connects mindfulness practice and theories with diverse models of public interest practice, particularly those rooted in rebellious lawyering. Second, it describes the evolution of specific courses at the intersection of mindfulness and rebellious lawyering, providing a description of course content and design across five cohorts. Third, it explores lessons learned through the voices of students during and after completion of the courses. While not a traditional model, this Article relies heavily on the reflections of students to ensure their individual experiences are authentically understood.

I. CREATING A FOUNDATION: SITUATING CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES WITHIN LEGAL EDUCATION

This Article does not aim to simply replicate and reinterpret the work of others who have considered mindfulness in legal education. Rather, it introduces one model by which contemplative practices have generated positive outcomes for students working as legal externs across a range of public interest organizations, consistent with Magee's earlier observation: "[T]he incorporation of these practices into legal

32. Magee, supra note 11, at 543.
33. Id. at 547.
34. Harris, Lin & Selbin, supra note 28, at 2125.
35. See infra note 46.
education and the practice of law portends a fundamental reshaping of the foundations of a lawyer’s sources of both practical knowledge and ethical grounding, serving as both fresh epistemology, and internally-generated, professionally consistent ethics.”

Approaching the practice of law with a desire for inter- and intrapersonal transformation is an essential aspect of mindful lawyering, and likewise, mindful legal education. For example, mindful lawyers seek to develop not only the skills necessary to work effectively with clients, but also the consciousness necessary to “connect, not separate, ideas of ‘working for justice’ and ‘living justly.’”

While the latter is not a new idea within many strands of public interest lawyering, it diverges from more traditionally understood areas. Specifically, it integrates embodied contemplative practices aimed at bringing attention and intention to the legal skills, ethics, and relationships needed to build and sustain social change. Consider Artika R. Tyner’s observations regarding collaborative lawyering:

The collaborative lawyer partners with clients to reach a shared vision of social change. The client does not simply hand over a legal problem to a lawyer; instead, the collaborative lawyer utilizes his/her legal training to establish a coalition of support for reform. This is distinguishable from traditional legal practice because the lawyer is cognizant of the limitations of his/her professional role and resists the temptation to impose his/her own legal culture, views and expectations on their clients.

Instead of viewing contemplative practices as separate from collaborative lawyering, a pedagogy of mindful social justice lawyering exposes students to practices that enable them to effectively navigate and interrogate the complex relationships of practice. In turn, students are empowered “to join with clients, communities, and any allies they

36. Magee, supra note 11, at 537.
37. See González, supra note 12; see also Harris, supra notes 28; Harris, infra note 58; Harris, Lin & Selbin, supra note 28; Harris & Wildman, supra note 27; Magee, supra note 11.
38. González, supra note 12 (manuscript at 4) (on file with author).
can enlist in collective efforts to change the world and through the process each other." By bringing "attention to the client’s thoughts, feelings, and behavior," contemplative practices ask students to cultivate a heightened awareness for the actual and perceived identities they carry with them into social justice practice by virtue of simply being lawyers. In approaching professional identity as a complex interpersonal conception, the ideas and ideals of public interest practice—that collective struggles and commitments are at the foundation of lasting social change—become increasingly concrete for students. The following student reflection brings forth this idea:

I run workshops [as a fellow at a family law self-help center] for self-represented litigants to help them complete different stages of their family law cases. The purpose of our self-help center is to give the litigants the education and power they need to navigate the court system . . . The reality . . . is that it [would be] easier [for me] to fill out the forms [for] litigants . . . [rather] than . . . walk [them] through the forms. [But,] I am better at my job every day because I took Reb[ellious] Law[yering], [because I know] . . . my job is to help the [people] tell their stories through the court forms. In showing litigants the forms and listening to what . . . brought them into the courthouse, we work together to ensure that the judges hear [their] stories . . . [T]he objective . . . that people . . . have the power to advocate for themselves, . . . reminds me to be contemplative and collaborative rather than rushing through the forms just because they are second nature . . .

As a pedagogy, mindful social justice lawyering reflects an activist approach to learning, where the classroom and community merge into a democratic laboratory of praxis. This requires a willingness to

40. *Id.* at 227.
42. *Id.* at 2127 (noting that “[t]he mindful lawyer can learn to be aware of these matrices of power without being defeated by them, and even can learn to employ them in transformative ways”).
43. To protect confidentiality, student names are not associated with responses presented in this Article.
44. E-mail from Student to Thalia González (Mar. 4, 2015) (on file with author).
consider and accept public interest practice as an iterative process of reflecting upon, and learning from, shared narratives of injustice. Mindful experiential legal education can thus be understood as an expression of a more ethical and self-reflective professional practice stimulated by, and often culminating in, new narratives aimed at creating new norms grounded in collective engagement, risk-taking, problem solving, and action. Another student narrative captures this idea eloquently:

We as individuals, and even as a community, have the power to change ourselves, and change the systems which guide our social and political interactions. But in order to do this, people must sacrifice. People must believe in a change that is greater than them[]. And while this sounds nice and easy on paper, it is not. We live in a country whose constitution values property over people, and whose bill of rights is in constant jeopardy. But that does not mean we should exchange optimism for cynicism . . . .

For these reasons, the theme of reshaping human consciousness has been the most salient theme of our class for me. Deconstructing regnant systems first requires individuals to look objectively and critically at the system, thereby recognizing the potential for rebellious lawyering, or even restorative justice. Reshaping human consciousness is not some idealistic mantra[] but rather, an imperative to think critical[ly] about the law.45

Turning to the course design, rooting the theoretical foundation in rebellious lawyering makes these ideas more salient.46 The courses draw from the formative and influential work of Gerald López to encourage a range of scholars and practitioners of rebellious lawyering47 to connect theory with experiential learning. The courses

46. The literature of this movement is extensive and has been theorized as rebellious lawyering, third dimensional lawyering, collaborative lawyering, democratic lawyering, social justice lawyering, and community lawyering. Gerald López is considered the author of the seminal work in the field.
47. See generally GERALD P. LÓPEZ, REBELLIOUS LAWYERING: ONE CHICANO’S VISION OF PROGRESSIVE LAW PRACTICE (1992); Gerald P. López, A Rebellious Philosophy Born in East L.A., in A COMPANION TO LATINA/O STUDIES 240–50 (Juan Flores & Renato Rosaldo eds., 2007); Gerald P. López, An Aversion to
orient public legal practice around equality and human dignity, relationship transformation, and dismantlement of systems that institutionalize privilege and discrimination. By engaging mainstream contemplative law discourses with a larger body of literature that has challenged and catalyzed the disruption of traditional notions of legal practice, students are able to easily connect the foundation of contemplative practices to readily recognizable forms public interest and community legal practice.

For example, Ascanio Piomelli’s and Gerald López’s observations regarding the need for lawyers to empower their clients to be agents of change provide a starting point for students to consider “how transformational change at the interpersonal level is linked to transformational change at the regional, national and global levels.”

For Piomelli,

[Democratic lawyers] reject ... the lawyering domain: the expert lawyer who represents wisely on behalf of passive clients. Instead, democratic lawyers envision—and with others act upon—an inclusive, participatory, and egalitarian understanding of democracy as a transformative approach to social change and relationships, one that enhances the power of ordinary people and their groups to meet their needs by actively participating in self-government and collective public action.

Similarly, for López, “a client and a lawyer do not want simply to add to each other’s knowledge ... Instead, they desire to challenge

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what each knows—how each gained it, what each believes about it, and how each shares and uses it."\(^{50}\) This requires rebellious lawyers to develop a capacity to listen deeply, share openly, reflect critically, and cultivate a deeper social awareness.\(^{51}\) In her illuminating work on third dimensional lawyering, Lucie White unintentionally identifies mindfulness. For White, lawyers act “on the third dimension” when their advocacy “seeks to enable poor people to see themselves and their social situation in ways that enhance their world-changing powers.”\(^{52}\) Doing so, she explains, “change[s] the attitudes and self-concepts of lawyers themselves,” as their “work seeks to transform [their] own political identities, relationships, and commitments, enabling [them] to work more effectively with historically subordinated groups to achieve social justice.”\(^{53}\) As Angel Kyodo Williams writes, “[t]here is a place that we find when we look deeply into ourselves” and “that allows us to be completely free of our histories, our stories, our hang-ups . . . We actually have a freedom spot in our brains[.]”\(^{54}\) When one emphasizes relationships and connectivity, the practice of law becomes a “legal-political enterprise of democracy promotion,” and lawyer-client relationships restore abandoned narratives of citizenship.\(^{55}\) Similar ideas are present in the context of coalition building:

When we work in coalition . . . we compare our struggles and challenge one another’s assumptions. We learn of the gaps and

\(^{50}\) LÓPEZ, REBELLIOUS LAWYERING, supra note 47, at 53.

\(^{51}\) Id. at 57-62. While not named as mindfulness or aimed at exposing linkages to mindfulness practices, law and social movement literature has also addressed the capacity of lawyers to view themselves as collaborators in the organization and the expression of justice narratives consistent with contemplative lawyering. See, e.g., Lani Guinier & Gerald Torres, Changing the Wind: Notes Toward a Demosprudence of Law and Social Movements, 123 YALE L.J. 2740, 2781 (2013) (discussing that while courts and lawyers are key to the creation of social fairness and justice narratives through law, lawyers must be attentive to the essential roles that social movements and organized constituencies of non-expert participants play in the creation of authoritative interpretative communities).

\(^{52}\) White, Collaborative Lawyering, supra note 47, at 157.

\(^{53}\) Id. at 157-58.


\(^{55}\) Alfieri, Educating Lawyers for Community, supra note 27, at 145.
absences in our knowledge. We learn a few tentative, starting truths, the building blocks of a theory of subordination . . . .

Working in coalition forces us to look for both the obvious and non-obvious relationships of domination, helping us to realize that no form of subordination ever stands alone.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus, as Harris, Lin, and Selbin remind us, mindfulness does not dictate a set of ideas or theories about issues of power, privilege, bias or oppression. Instead, mindfulness provides a framework for critical thinking and self-reflection regarding the relationship and boundaries between individuals and systems.\textsuperscript{57}

Within this larger framework students are encouraged to view law as not only a "practice," but also a problem-solving instrument, by which professional ethics and the ethics of knowledge and collaboration are equally appreciated and underscored. While these ideas may initially seem divorced from contemplative and mindfulness practice, one needs look no further than Gandhi's non-violent resistance movement, which later inspired civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., and anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela.\textsuperscript{58} By connecting overarching themes, such as shared power, through scholarship, experiential community practice, and contemplative practices, rather than through one learning modality, the courses emphasize how narrative constructions reflecting dominant understandings predominate the legal discourse and strive to ensure that other narratives are expressed. Consider the following two student reflections:

Nearly a year removed from Reb[ellious] Law[ying], I am still realizing just how rare rebellious thinking and lawyering are . . . . Perhaps I was naïve, but ideas like empowering clients, truly listening, and narrative storytelling made . . . sense. Advocates should embody these qualities. Their voices should be their client’s megaphones. Throughout the readings, the speakers, the class


\textsuperscript{57} See Harris, Lin & Selbin, supra note 28, at 2076.

\textsuperscript{58} See, e.g., Angela Harris, Lawyering as Peacemaking, 56 VILL. L. REV. 819 (2012); Nehal A. Patel & Ksenia Petlakh, Gandhi's Nightmare: Bhopal and the Need for Mindful Jurisprudence, 30 HARV. J. RACIAL & ETHNIC JUST. 151 (2014).
discussions, and the internship, I constantly felt like these are [sic] the type of advocates I would want to represent me. I wanted their thoughtfulness, the recognition of their clients’ experiences, their respect, and their commitment to their clients’ cause above their own.

Very few classes and experiences truly shape how you frame the world, but Reb[ellious] Law[ying/Community Law Internship] did just that. There is a great privilege that accompanies being a lawyer or even attending law school. The price of that privilege must be a commitment to do what is hard and to what is right. I must actively shape the profession to reflect the type of lawyer that I want to represent me. I must remain conscious of my identity and my role in shaping the world I work in.59

After I graduated . . . I was offered a two-year fellowship at Farmworker Justice . . . , a non-profit organization that seeks to empower migrant and seasonal farmworkers to improve their living and working conditions . . . and access to justice. At [Farmworker Justice], I have been able to continue to consider and apply rebellious lawyering themes in my every day work.

For instance, narrative story telling has been a crucial tool in my communication with farmworkers. Narrative story telling not only allows me to share my family’s experience as farmworkers to connect with the greater farmworker community, but it also provides a more suitable means [of] conduct[ing] investigative research. Rather than conducting a formal interview with farmworkers, I recognize that storytelling is the preferable method of communication when discussing sensitive issues, like immigration and labor violations. In our policy advocacy work, storytelling has also been a powerful way to build a broad coalition of allies. By describing the work ethic, values, and immigration experiences of farmworkers, we are able to build a network of allies . . . .60


60. Student, Reflections: Rebellious Lawyering Experience 6 (Spring 2011) (unpublished course reflection) (on file with author).
Not simply aimed at developing awareness and skills for the later practice of law, the courses\textsuperscript{61} create a space for students to reflect on how law school and lawyering perpetuate systemic bias and subordination.

I . . . feel . . . because of my engagement with community-centered learning and reflecti[on] on the privileged status inherent in being a lawyer that I am more able to confront the reality that legal education often perpetuates systemic bias and subordination. At the very least, if I do not confront this reality, I see it . . . . [M]any of my peers seem quite surprised that a lawyer could practice law in a community-oriented or rebellious fashion. I suppose those terms can be specific . . . [b]ut the central idea that the client can be a problem solver is completely novel to many of my peers, and that is problematic. Many . . . seem to [come] to law school thinking that with their [degree] they can be the problem solver that the client needs; that they are superior and deference must be shown to them; and that certain types of law, say business, are more worthy than others . . . .\textsuperscript{62}

Early on in my 1L experience . . . . I began to feel the alienation of a legal system that pares down lives, stories, pain, and loss into discrete issues and holdings. I began to see how rules and standards feel much more logical and fair when they are removed from the personal narratives behind them. I saw how clarity and consistency kill thoughtfulness and equality. This mechanism is not a mistake. It is too calculated and pervasive to be happenstance. Working in an isolated world free from personal consequences simplifies difficult moral questions. But even in this perfect world, the issues are complicated, the moral debates muddled. It is hard enough to decide cases in an isolated world, but just imagine adding context, personal narratives, social forces, history, lives, people, and emotion to the debate. The law would be impossibly difficult.

However, the righteous road is often the steepest. So frequently in this world, we shy away from reality. We seek to define how the world ought to be, forgetting to listen to how the world actually is.

\textsuperscript{61} While Part II focuses on specific courses, these courses are reflective of and translate into a broader construction and understanding of mindful social justice education.

We must be better. We must embrace the difficulty of honestly recognizing the world before the law conventionalizes it. None of our actions are neutral, and we must be fully accountable to our role in perpetuating inequality and furthering subordination. So while analogizing the details away from every case may make a decision seem more logical and fair, it's actually suppressing the case's unique narrative. Recognizing and appreciating the uniqueness of each case and each person is much more difficult. It is harder to constantly be conscious of the effects of your practice, and it is harder to lawyer rebelliously.  

II. AN EVOLUTION OF PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE: COURSE STRUCTURE AND DESIGN

Clinical education and community-based experiential learning require students to accept an active role in collective decision-making, develop authentic relationships with community partners, produce high quality work, and engage in individual and group mindfulness practices. For those reasons, maintaining a small cohort size has been essential. Similarly, incorporating community knowledge has been essential to exposing the root causes of inequality from intersectional perspectives. To root the pedagogy of mindful lawyering in pragmatic terms, below are brief descriptions of the courses beginning with the initial 2010 pilot to the 2015 cohort.

A. Spring 2010

In 2010, a pilot seminar met once a week and required that students work eight hours as community-based legal externs. Seminar assignments were designed to produce mutually beneficial outcomes for students and community partners separate from daily legal work. Students noted this collaboration was imperative not only to completing academic exercises, but also to guaranteeing the usefulness of work product. Although limited because the seminar only met once a week, the integration of contemplative practices included mindful listening.

63. Reb Law Reflection, supra note 59.
64. Students reported working an average of 10.8 hours.
65. For example, students collaborated with community partners to create individualized community resource guides.
and individual reflective journaling. Once a month, students shared selections from their journal for collective discussion. These entries raised complex and personal issues that required collective empathy, thoughtful responsiveness, and group problem-solving. In addition to focusing on their individual experiences, students completed informal “interviews” to develop a nuanced understanding of the diverse individual and community lived experiences their organizations sought to serve. These “interviews” brought to light untold intersectional narratives of subordination and oppression. In addition to a final paper, the course capstone was a community symposium focused on access to justice.

B. Spring 2011

In 2011, the course was approved as a full seminar. The new designation increased the course time commitment and experiential learning requirements. Evaluating the course design, I made several pedagogical changes, including the addition of new community partners and assignments and a speaker series. The speaker series was designed to expand the multi-dimensional nature of the course and more deeply integrate community knowledge and lived experiences.

Contemplative practices were expanded to include reflective reading, reflective inquiry, and mindful walking. Most seminar meetings were held outdoors with the students sitting in a circle. Students also led discussions based on their journaling. The discussions centered on topics of privilege, bias, race, racism, power, the role of law and subordination, intersectionality, and democratic ideals. Leading the discussions provided students with the opportunity to develop skills in respecting group dynamics and facilitating dialogue. This equitable distribution of power emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge, collaborating, and engaging in critical dialogue. By establishing a “classroom” based on bidirectional power, students more freely and effectively identified the differential access to power experienced by those inside and outside academic institutions, and analyzed and

66. Students reported working an average of 16.4 hours.
67. For example, students were required to collaboratively design and execute “community justice projects” and submit written reflections about the experience.
critiqued these power dynamics. Students often reflected on the processes and dynamics associated with collaborative learning:

Problem solving with the class helped me overcome the frustration, disappointment, and disillusionment I felt at times during my internship. The group was also there when we had successes to share. Moreover, my classmates’ narratives gave me a vivid look into a variety of organizations, deepening my understanding of the diverse and vibrant public interest law community. And yet, despite our different clients, projects and specific missions, I found that we were all united by a fundamental dedication to serving and attaining equal access to justice for underrepresented populations. I came to view my passionate classroom community as a microcosm of the public interest legal world, an interrelated network of individuals and organizations working collectively to positively impact the lives of others. In this way, the class structure enacted the very principle we examined in class and put into practice at our internships: that we can best achieve progress by working collaboratively toward the shared goal of social justice.  

The multi-faceted class structure presented me [with] the tools to create an experience and/or perspective rather than consume one. Interestingly, this structure seems to require the professor [to] step[ ] back as a “teacher” and up as a facilitator of learning experiences . . . .

I believe the multi-layered class structure allow[ed me] to . . . refine (both restrict and expand) [my] individual conceptualizations of “change” and “progress” and “social justice” and [the] personal efficacy in enacting anything that resembles “actual” “change.”

The theoretical backing of the class also connected to me on a very personal level, shaping, and challenging my perspective and awareness.

No longer a pilot course, there was additional opportunity for the students to connect theory with practice, and support each other in disruptive and challenging moments. The following narrative captures
the voices of multiple students who submitted written reflections discussing the development of peer relationships as a community of learners:

We started as a group of strangers, but soon evolved into a close-knit support network. Professor González facilitated our classroom discussions, but allowed the course to develop organically, and each week we shared our experiences, struggles, and triumphs and supported one another fully throughout the process. Collaborating with my peers deeply enhanced my experience . . . because each person had a unique experience[,] which made our discussions robust and insightful.71

The community “interview” assignment was expanded to include the submission of written reflections of each interview. Not surprisingly, topics explored in the reflections included: the evolution of public interest legal practice; the role of lawyers in social movements; collaboration; community development; power; subordination; the experimental nature of social activism; professionalism; and community knowledge. Particular attention was given to questions of accountability of public interest lawyers to clients, broader constituencies and social movements, and the effectiveness of law as a mechanism for social change. Furthermore, this assignment led to critical assessment of issues of power and privilege within different political systems and in-class discussions of innovative lawyering practices to challenge social hierarchies. Understanding how power, particularly in the context of law, mediates the lives of subordinated people was a pedagogical goal of the assignment. As the following reflection illustrates, students developed this understanding:

I became (hyper) aware of my actual and perceived status as a white, educated, male in the client/provider dynamic and the ease [with] which we can transpose a vision of justice upon someone who really wants something entirely different. I learned that to combat and quiet the inner monologue I think we all have[,] the one that speaks over someone while you sit and “listen[,]” I needed [to] consciously challenge myself to really analytically shut down and actually try to

listen. The awareness that this is perhaps not a default setting in how we interact with clients (or anyone really) opens the door for the actualization of community based knowledge sharing (or rather the recognition of knowledge) and empowerment through narratives.72

C. Spring 2012

In 2012, the course evolved from a single course to co-requisite courses. The new design promoted increasingly complex deliberation and reflective practice, and fostered a stronger sense of community.73 Guided by the theoretical underpinning of rebellious lawyering courses, the speaker series focused more intentionally on lived experiences.

[For me], the speaker series demonstrated that there is an opportunity for those passionate about social justice and other forms of justice, to do great work . . . [B]eing exposed to lawyers who are indeed rebellious and . . . were and are able to do great progressive work[,] challenged my notion of what it meant to be a lawyer . . . . I had some . . . perception of lawyers as contract drafters, or something typical like that, broken down after reading rebellious law theory, but meeting and talking to those who inform and embody the theory brought the connection between rebellious law theory and rebellious law practice much closer and . . . forced us all to [transform] our idea of what it means to be a rebellious lawyer, and a lawyer more generally.74

Discussion topics also expanded and more explicitly considered: rebellious lawyering; political problem solving; the social and civic capital of communities; coalition building; radical inclusion; privilege; power; community resistance; patterns of subordination and marginalization; race relations and identity politics; and the impact of individual experiences on the perceptions of justice in society. The adoption of an informal, and often repeated, theme of the seminar, “changing human consciousness,” captured this final idea. Weekly

72. Rebellious Lawyering Practicum Reflection, supra note 69 (emphasis in original).
73. The new design also made possible the addition of new readings and assignments, mindfulness practices, and a larger speaker series.
practice reflections were open-topic, led by the whole cohort, and integrated mindfulness practices to help students when tensions or emotional experiences came to the forefront. Reflective discussions challenged students to challenge their assumptions about lawyering for justice.

At the beginning of that semester I wrote the following as a personal definition for rebellious lawyering:

[R]ebellious lawyering means strategic use of privilege. Exercising an individual’s skills and knowledge of the law with those of the greater community to work together towards justice, in and outside of the systems already in place. It is about utilizing the lawyer in everyone, and collaborating towards justice.” Reading that now, I still agree with my inexperienced, rebellious-self, but I also feel like it’s a bit sterile. Now I might simply say that rebellious lawyering is collaboration. Reflecting back on my time intern[ing]... particularly the work I did performing intake, I think that my most rebellious moments were when there was that understanding between myself and the client that we are both learning how to navigate a system and in that moment where they are [sic] sharing their story—oftentimes traumatic and stressful to repeat and relive—we were learning together.75

The cohort also elected to work collectively76 on several community justice projects, and one student articulated the impact of such collective action:

Being able to coordinate a community justice event with my fellow classmates that further integrated our group into larger community efforts was transformative. We became part of a community working to build a Superadobe building that would serve as a gathering space. Our hands aided in the work of mixing earthen building materials from the site and constructing layers on the

76. Nine students decided to work on a community justice project in partnership with a local high school. The students led research workshops, collaborated on research, participated in planning meetings, and attended community presentations. Their collaborative work laid the foundation for a restorative justice program at that high school in the Fall of 2012.
building's frame. Our collective efforts brought to life a gorgeous building that is low-impact, efficient[,] and will serve as an incredible resource for the community moving forward. This experience instilled in me the recognition that awareness towards climate change and environmental sustainability must be integrated into the everyday work of communities seeking social justice.77

D. Spring 2014

The 2014 course design was modeled after the 2012 courses with one exception: increased integration of mindfulness practices. This allowed many students to contextualize their frustrations with the limitations and possibilities of social change in a broader ethical framework. Some of the most impactful moments occurred when students shared their own lived experiences with the subordination, oppression, and privilege of law. These moments challenged everyone to consider assumptions of power, identity, society, and structural oppression. Furthermore, mindfulness practices disturbed the comfortable boundaries of knowledge production, as some students physically embodied the theories, themes, and experiences identified in the readings. These moments required a collective rethinking of normative learning patterns and of critical awareness as essential for social justice lawyering in opposition to the dominant paradigm. Most significantly, by authentically sharing their narratives, students were able to suspend, challenge, and ultimately transform their prior assumptions. The following narrative captures the journey for one student:

“The opposite of poverty is not wealth, it is justice.” This is one of the biggest lessons I took from the Rebellious Lawyering [and community law] course[s] and one that has changed the manner in which I see the law practice and the role that attorneys can play in our communities . . . . I grew up mistrusting lawyers and hating our legal system because I felt it was unfair and unjust to hardworking low-income families. My skepticism started early when my parents attempted to fix their legal status and looked to multiple attorneys and notaries to help them navigate the process. I felt attorneys let

my family down time and time again as they attempted to become legal residents and later when they failed to help my father save our home from foreclosure.

Reb[ellious] Law[yering] allowed me to see a new way of practicing law.

Attorneys have a responsibility to take the voice of their client and have it be heard. An attorney must inquire not judge, protect not further criminalize, learn not ignore the client, [and] be in solidarity. One of the keys to helping our communities and obtaining justice for low-income people is having their voices heard. The struggle of the poor, the homeless, and the undocumented are rarely heard. Narrative story telling in the legal stage is crucial to changing the law and tilting the scale of justice to be much more equitable than our history suggests it has been in the past. This is why the statement of justice is the opposite of poverty is so strong to me because we first must create a ... more equitable society for our generation and future generations to thrive and achieve economic justice. But until then[,] we must continue to fight for justice in order to break the barriers that keep our people from progressing and moving forward because it is impossible to take a step forward when there are thousands of obstacles in the way. These systematic barriers are the ones that we have to break and the first step to achieve that is to be heard.

E. Spring 2015

In the Spring of 2015, the courses were redesigned to integrate theory and practice to fully develop a pedagogy of mindful lawyering. The first class opened with a short meditation, discussion, and


79. The course syllabus description included the following statement:
The course will introduce students to the practice of “mindful lawyering” through contemplative reflection, journaling, and the development of mindfulness to explore the ways such practices are directly relevant to anti-subordination work. Students will also engage in narrative inquiry to cultivate personal and interpersonal awareness skills supporting marginalized communities in the struggle to obtain an equitable share of power within a democratic society.

intention-setting based on the prompt “cultivating personal and professional skills to support marginalized communities in the struggle for justice.” This intention-setting practice was revisited throughout the semester. A discussion about how mindfulness can create the community necessary to inspire a commitment to on-going resistance aimed at “releas[ing] the attachment to dominator thinking and practice”80 followed each intention-setting practice. Students continued to journal and elected to share selections for discussion. These reflective discussions raised not only complex issues related to rebellious lawyering and community-centered practice, but also issues about personal and professional identity development, fears, anxieties, and inter- and intrapersonal conflicts. The discussion further required thoughtful responsiveness. One entry captures such issues.

I typically take public transportation to get around Los Angeles . . . . However, the . . . buses . . . can be . . . unreliable. One day this week, three buses were supposed to have shown up . . . [but did not]. Not wanting to be late to the [Los Angeles LGBT] Center, I called an Uber . . . . When I stepped out[] of the Uber, I realized how privileged [I was]. . . . When I arrived in my comfortable, air-conditioned, leather interior . . . Uber, many of [the homeless LGBT youths who live at the Center] were standing outside talking or smoking. I [felt] their collective judgment, watching the well-dressed white girl get out of an expensive car that she does not even drive and ma[k]e a beeline for the entrance to Legal Services. I felt an urge to tell them that I normally take the bus, that my family is low-[income], that I work on behalf of the LGBT community [in hopes that society will become] less prejudiced. I felt an urge to tell them about every hardship that I had ever faced, to explain every reason why I am not as privileged as I appear. Yet these urges prove just how privileged I really am. I am white. I am heterosexual. I am cisgender. I am educated. I have multiple safe places that I can call home. I have endless opportunities to succeed and know that a bright future lies in front of me. I continue to struggle with the fact that I am a privileged person coming into a community that is marginalized, disadvantaged, and regarded as second-class citizens. Our [class] readings have helped me handle the situation. Rather

than pretend there is no separation or distinction between me and the community in which I work[,] I must recognize that separation and deconstruct it . . . .

Three new contemplative exercises and mindfulness practices were added to the course: (1) class began with a meditation, which became student-led after the second week; (2) students attended free monthly yoga classes taught by a local teacher; and (3) students participated in a community series focused on mindfulness and social justice. The community series was designed to address how mindfulness informs and sustains social justice work through practice and discussion. The series also created an additional space for the cohort to reflect on their legal work and on how mindfulness supports alliance and solidarity with those marginalized and excluded from spaces of power and privilege. Consistent with course foundations, community activists, advocates, and practitioners led each session. The following journal reflection illustrates how students integrated mindfulness practices into their legal work:

The mindfulness and social justice workshop . . . made me really think about Thich Naht Han’s words on mindfulness as being fully present and engaged in the moment. Professor González’s statement . . . that if we are not present it means our mind is either in the past or thinking about what we cannot control in the future, [really] made me . . . think about how I’ve been operating these past few weeks . . . .

Before I began work today, I tried . . . one of the mindfulness lessons we learned [in] the workshop. Starting simple, I began to practice mindful breathing—being aware of each breath, consciously working to make each breath deeper as I went along[,] and . . . ultimately slow[ing] my breath to calm my mind and body. While I have never intentionally practiced mindful actions on my own in the past, I have to say it was very effective. After I engaged in mindful breathing, it was easier to become present—to learn from my colleagues . . . .

In early class discussions, some students met mindful lawyering with skepticism, and even challenged its value as disconnected from activism. By mid-semester, however, the influence of these practices became clear not only in their journals, practice reflections, engagement with different exercises, and seminar discussions, but also in their community justice projects.

One way I am trying to stay more mindful is to go outside when I feel like I need to take a breather. Of course, this is not a lot because it would be hard to always go outside, but sometimes I just need a breather and [to] reflect on the things that are happening. I feel like if I didn't do that, then I stood [sic] more of a chance of getting overwhelmed by the work I was handling. It is still resonating in me that these are the actual lives of children that we are messing around with. These decisions affect them for the rest of their lives. If we don't do a good job, they could actually be in a worse situation. That is a lot to have on your conscience, especially when you see families and clients in the halls and in the cafeteria worrying about the current and future state of their families.  

Three community justice projects were developed to further explore questions such as: How can mindfulness become a revolutionary force if it is embedded in a practice of lawyering that targets oppressive systems? While contemplative practices were integrated, the courses did not become one-dimensional or deemphasize development of legal skills, engagement with theories of public interest, and social justice lawyering or community-centered legal practice.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

Because this legal education model falls outside traditional pedagogy, its short- and long-term outcomes are difficult to holistically characterize, assess, and evaluate. This is particularly true when considering the highly collaborative, rather than individual, nature of learning fostered by the course design. Since student experiences simply cannot be captured by traditional measurements, such as course evaluations or surveys, written reflective materials provide insight.

83. E-mail from Student to Thalia González (Nov. 15, 2016, 04:34 PST) (on file with author).
For purposes of this Article, an analysis of written reflective materials occurred at multiple stages. In-term written reflection materials from the 2010 to 2015 cohorts were reviewed. In the Summer of 2013 and Spring of 2015, students from the 2011, 2012, and 2014 cohorts provided retrospective reflections by answering a series of open-ended questions. Assessing retrospective reflections had a two-fold intent: (1) establish a comparative data set of in-term reflections and (2) capture detailed narratives describing the impact of the courses one to three years after completion. I reviewed all materials looking for patterns within and connections between written reflections and student responses. This interpretive approach allowed for a contextualized inquiry into students’ perceptions of course material and experience. Personal identity and personal and professional ethics themes emerged from this analysis. These themes included: critical consciousness; ability to effectively question assumptions of power, privilege, and identity politics; professional ethics; promotion of collaborative decision-making; development of a sustained commitment to social change; knowledge sharing and collective learning; and a practice of continual reflection. Many students translated learning about social justice in a critical context into a commitment to making a change. Consider the following reflections:

Violations of educational rights were often hidden beneath a lifetime of neglect, language barriers, and layers of distrust. By forging a human connection with clients and earning their trust, I sought to unearth and assemble their stories. The final portrait was often an unexpected one. [One client] was suspended from school and subject to standard disciplinary procedure, despite struggling with stuttering and memory loss. After our interview, I learned that [he] had suffered a traumatic brain injury ten years earlier and that the schools had never tested him, despite his mother’s numerous requests. [Another client], a 200-pound young woman covered in gang tattoos, told me during our interview that she was failing math because she had never been taught: she was afraid to ask for help.

The testimony of dozens of youth... depicted broken families, broken schools and a broken delinquency system. Their stories left me indignant, but also deeply moved. Feelings of outrage and admiration inspire my commitment to public interest law and desire
to correct inequalities, empower extinguished voices and imagine and enact a more just reality.\textsuperscript{84}

I have become a little more disillusioned with our government, with regnant lawyering practices, and with overall apathy and complacency among the general populace towards growing issues such as the environment, education, and homelessness. It is easy for someone like me to come from a position of privilege and take that for granted. Instead I want to... "do real, meaningful and empowering work."... [The experience, with its combination of experiential learning and class reflection, has been crucial to] expos[ing] me to the complexities of the rule of law... [Moreover, it has fueled my desire to pursue a career that addresses the intersection of law and policymaking.]\textsuperscript{85}

Demonstrating transformation, students further acknowledged they developed an ability to not only articulate, but also affirmatively approach the need for an equitable society.

The [courses] were transforming. In the past[,] I may have defined social justice in somewhat static terms[:] as assuring an equal playing field and ridding society of bigotry, access to adequate living conditions and education, fair wages and treatment under the law – all noble and necessary endeavors, but inherently limited and fixed. My previous definition of social justice ended with a period.

[Now,] I understand the underlying principles of my original definition have not changed[,]... [b]ut... there is no period fixing my current concept of social justice. Context and circumstance demand evolving dynamics. Social justice is a concept I cannot concretely define, only one that I can continually pursue. This does not condemn the pursuit of social justice as ultimately fruitless. It amplifies its relevance as a staple of a changing, evolving society. The course gave me no illusions of law as a silver bullet solution or social justice as a concept that can be truly and actually and fully achieved. However, it provided a glimpse of “rebellious lawyering” in action, where lawyers play important roles on dynamic teams and

\textsuperscript{84} Student, Rebellious Lawyering Quotes (2013) (unpublished course reflection) (on file with author).
\textsuperscript{85} Reb Law Reflections,\textit{ supra} note 45.
influence movements that inch forward, adding another layer to society’s understanding and practice of social justice.\textsuperscript{86}

Initially, I felt [like] an outsider trying to “get in” on the fight for social change and justice. But, what I took away from my experience is that when we are in this struggle together, whether we are lawyers, social workers, community advocates, students, or teachers, etc. We can all develop awareness, problem-solving techniques, and advocacy strategies that attempt to solve life’s complexities and challenges, regardless of [whether or not] they are law-related . . . \textsuperscript{87}

Written material analysis also provided a glimpse into their experience with the theoretical foundations of the courses.

The rebellious vision isn’t patient with change[;] it has a kind of urgency built into it that is inspiring and energizing. It reminded me to never lose sight of why we live and how the legal system works to support it. We live to treat each other better, to lift each other up, to enjoy the relationships we build, and to work to make our society better for those who come after.\textsuperscript{88}

I must begin by acknowledging how formative the semester I spent in Reb[ellious] Law[ying] was. Not only did I gain experience in the field, I [also] learned how to be conscious and critical of many things associated with my fieldwork. I brought those new critiques and questions with me to my work as an intern each week in the hope of finding ways to be more effective in my role. The experience I gained and the lens through which I took in that experience was [sic] definitely a unique piece of my undergrad[uate] education . . . .

\ldots

It was definitely hard and sometimes tolling to take in all . . . that I heard, but it was also a learning experience that I don’t think could be duplicated . . . in my life. As a student I was put in such a unique position to be impactful and to be responsible that I really had no choice but to learn and grow every single time I went into my cubicle

\textsuperscript{86} Rebellious Lawyering Practicum Reflection, \textit{supra} note 69.
\textsuperscript{87} Practicum Reflection, \textit{supra} note 71.
\textsuperscript{88} Student, Rebellious Lawyering Reflection (Spring 2015) (unpublished course reflection) (on file with author).
and learn again every time I sat in our . . . circle and reflected on my own and others’ experiences in the field. I don’t think that I could have possibly been nearly as effective in my role nor . . . have been able to continue much of the work I did without having that time in class to reflect and listen to my peers, Professor González, guest speakers, or read the assigned readings. It was a really amazing experience to bring all of that back with me as an intern and share it with the other interns and some of the attorneys (who were willing/had time to listen). Even a year later[,] I find myself connecting a number of my experiences as a student and now a graduate to the rebellious framework we engaged with as a class.89

For me, the class centered on two core concepts: process and people. We know that great processes are essential to bringing about great results[,] but this class takes that a step further and shows that many of our most important results are inherent in the process itself. For example, the process of coalition-building and collaboration central to Lopez’s approach pools resources and expertise that can achieve successful legal outcomes. That process also builds relationships that empower communities, shares knowledge between organizations, and provides leadership opportunities for coordination. Perhaps, in some situations, the same legal outcomes can be achieved without collaboration. But the underlying objectives that build momentum for movements cannot. The second core concept I learned was about people—to never forget that at the end of the day, everything we do is about people. Sometimes, legal work can be put in a vacuum and be totally disconnected from the basic premise of why it is important, and why we engage in it. It’s about people.90

I believe that it is largely because of my experiences [from the rebellious lawyering course and my community law externship] that I consistently find myself thinking about . . . , if not interacting with, issues of power, privilege, inequality and subordination. I suppose I am assuming that absent my experience . . . I would not think about these issues as critically. I think that is a fair assessment to make because I do not feel that law school (or, the general world) thinks of these issues critically.

[In fact], it was [not] until early in my second semester of law school that I found myself having conversations with a 2L about

89. Reb Law Narrative/Reflection, supra note 75.
90. Rebellious Lawyering Reflection, supra note 88.
power, privilege, inequality and subordination. She noted that in her experience at [law school] it is infrequent to have these conversations. Furthermore, she told me that the conversations do not take place in class or as part of the school, but as conversations between two people who care about these issues.

I [share my own] assessment and th[is] interaction . . . because I think it highlights the fact that one can go through law school . . . without being asked to consider her/his power, privilege, inequality[,] and subordination. On a more general level, it is rare to have a conversation in class or with others that discusses how those issues relate to what we think of as a “lawyer.” The lack of discussion, if not the mere lack of recognition, of the intersection between these issues and the law and the “lawyer,” highlights the perspective I had coming into law school.

I believe that without the opportunity I had to look at the law and lawyers critically, I would not be mindful of these issues.91

These reflections suggest the diverse ways in which experiential legal education and mindful lawyering can fundamentally shape how students engage in movements for social justice. Students have engaged in these movements by fostering greater self-reflection, developing consciousness of their connections to others, and asking deeper questions about the extent to which lawyering and law itself reinforce the status quo. Furthermore, students with daily client interaction reported a heightened understanding of complex issues facing communities, collaboration, and the importance of community problem-solving. The following written narratives of two students were typical:

As the course and my internship developed[,] I began to draw strong parallels and connections between theory and the work I was participating in, as well as the attitude and lens I was viewing my work and role through. I saw a strong connection between the concept of “widening the frame” of access to justice and the chronological growth of [the Inner City Law Center]. . . . From the slumlord litigation unit, to the homelessness prevention unit, to the unit designed to better address the unique and specific challenges facing many of our veterans, to the newly launched effort to bring permanent supportive housing to [Los Angeles], [the Inner City Law

91. Community Centered Education Reflection, supra note 62.
Center] has attempted to address the problem of homelessness and [lack of housing] from multiple angles.

I also recognized the organization[']s use of collaborative knowledge building. . . . [No case is about one client, but rather] the goal of ensuring safe housing conditions for entire buildings or properties . . . .

[My work] made [the] big picture more lucid and challenged my own selfishness. Instead of feeling as if I was [sic] wasting my time doing data entry[,] I felt as if our work (mine, my peers, the clients, those employed in the public interest community, allies in other [fields] . . .), however menial it felt while in the act, was contributing to a larger body of work and ultimately . . . [community] movement.92

I was challenged to answer the question that everyone had ignored: What went wrong? Each case presented different obstacles: uncooperative kids, divorced parents, fearful illegal immigrants[,] and disturbing instances of incest and rape. Patience, a willingness to adapt, and an ability to empathize with clients revealed a daunting web of interrelated issues beyond education, ranging from mental health, drug abuse, gang violence[,] and developmental disabilities.93

CONCLUSION

On one level this Article is about pedagogy and the desire for scholarly discourse on the contemplative law movement and the integration of mindfulness into experiential and clinical legal education. But on another equally important level, it is about elevating the voices and experiences of students who have began to approach their own practice with increasing intention and attention. As such, this Article expresses hope that legal education will align with Magee’s observation that the time has come for

[A] new approach to the foundation of legal education—one which may better instill in young lawyers an abiding sense of an inspiring professional identity, embodying self-reflective civic engagement and practical, ethical judgment by broadening their ways of learning

92. Rebellious Lawyering Practicum Reflection, supra note 69 (emphasis in original).
what they need to know to practice and to lead effectively in a changing world.94

The contemplative law movement is not an isolated initiative or one-dimensional trajectory within the legal profession. The integration of mindfulness into experiential courses and clinical education is a dynamic curricular innovation, where students learn skills essential to a practice of law grounded on “increase[ing] [their] awareness of the complex humanity at the center of the work of lawyering and [on] maximize[ing] [their] capacity to engage practical wisdom in the course of [their] service as lawyers, leaders, and human beings.”95 Simply put, critically questioning—through a lens of theories, experience, and mindfulness practices—the assumed static and universal complexities of politics, law, and society changes students’ realities. As their reality shifts, so does their orientation to the practice of law.96

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94. Magee, supra note 11, at 538.
95. Magee, supra note 11, at 538.
96. Such reorientation is consistent with Anna Carpenter’s characterization of clinical education’s social justice agenda as “seek[ing] to promote substantive equality and equality of opportunity, and to overcome the fact of legal, social, and political oppression, as well as the impact of oppression” and notes that “[t]his agenda also promotes fundamental fairness, both as a substantive and procedural matter.” Anna E. Carpenter, The Project Model of Clinical Education: Eight Principles to Maximize Student Learning and Social Justice Impact, 20 CLINICAL L. REV. 39, 55 (2013).