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Remembering Litigation Counsel Isaac Rethy (1984-2023)— A Brilliant Life Cut Tragically Short

For those of us who had the extraordinary privilege of working with Litigation Counsel **Isaac Rethy**, it remains impossible to believe that our beloved friend and colleague is no longer with us. He passed away this past April, at the heartbreakingly young age of 38. Isaac is survived by his wife, Zara Rethy, whom he met while they were both litigation associates at Simpson Thacher, and his toddler son, Aaron.



During his many years at the Firm, Isaac balanced a heavy docket of billable cases with high-impact *pro bono* matters. He played a pivotal role in a suit brought by the ACLU of Mississippi and the ACLU Foundation challenging racially discriminatory policing practices in Madison County, Mississippi. That suit culminated in a landmark consent decree pursuant to which the Madison County Sheriff's Department agreed to make sweeping changes to its policies on roadblocks and pedestrian stops. He went on to work with the Southern Poverty Law Center on a class action challenge to Mississippi's felony disenfranchisement and re-enfranchisement laws, and with the ACLU of Mississippi on a case defending the First Amendment rights of a Mississippi filmmaker. Most recently, Isaac worked with the ACLU of Mississippi, the ACLU Foundation and the Southern Poverty Law Center on a Voting Rights Act challenge to the districts used to elect Mississippi Supreme Court judges.

Isaac also quietly represented individuals in much smaller *pro bono* matters, which he handled with the same care and dedication as his higher-profile cases. For instance, he spent a full decade as counsel to "Jose," an immigrant facing deportation for three drug-related convictions that stemmed from an effort to self-medicate his serious, untreated mental illness. Isaac won a dismissal at the first competency hearing, only to have the Government successfully move to reopen the

case. Isaac then represented Jose through a second competency hearing. In February 2023, just a couple of months before Isaac passed away, the court dismissed the Government's case against Jose for a second time. Because of Isaac's relentless devotion to the case, Jose can safely remain in the United States, where he is receiving the mental health services he desperately needs.

Isaac was revered at the Firm for his deep understanding of legal theories, like *Monell* liability for civil rights violations and overcoming qualified immunity. He had almost a sixth sense for developing nuanced and novel legal arguments, which he would spin into cogent, persuasive briefs seemingly overnight. To say Isaac's legal talents were prodigious is an understatement. He was a genius in the truest sense of the word.

But what was perhaps most remarkable about Isaac was the kind, gentle manner in which he cared for others, including his clients. When the plaintiffs in the Madison County policing case were anxiously preparing for their depositions, Isaac was the one who calmed their nerves. He patiently helped them rehearse their stories, and answered all of their questions, sometimes multiple times, without ever using any legal jargon. During the actual depositions, when the Madison County Sheriff himself sat in the room intently listening to every word the plaintiffs said, Isaac put them at ease with his words of encouragement and his irreverent jokes, which always ended with his signature chuckle.

Isaac extended this same generosity of spirit to his friends at the Firm, who would turn to him time and again for guidance on their cases. He would painstakingly revise briefs, talk through legal arguments, and help find solutions when things went unexpectedly wrong. At the end of his long, silent pauses, Isaac would often offer approaches and answers that others had missed. For so many of us, Isaac was the invisible hand behind our work.

Though Isaac has left this world, he will forever live on as our standard-bearer. We will do our best to honor his legacy by doing as much good, with as much kindness, as we possibly can. Isaac would have expected no less.

Simpson Thacher Wins First Amendment Case That Advances Ability of Kansas Citizens to Vote by Mail

On May 4, 2023, Simpson Thacher client Voter Participation Center secured a significant First Amendment victory following a bench trial on a paper record in the United States District Court for the District of Kansas. The Court's ruling, which follows a 2021 entry of a preliminary injunction, permanently blocked the enforcement of anti-voter provisions in H.B. 2332, protecting voter access to personalized advance mail ballot applications in Kansas. In her decision in the case, *VoteAmerica v. Schwab*, Judge Kathryn Vratil ruled that the challenged parts of H.B. 2332 are "an unconstitutional infringement on plaintiff's First Amendment rights to speech and association" as well as "unconstitutionally overbroad."

In June 2021, the Firm, Campaign Legal Center (CLC), and Kansas attorney Mark Johnson filed the suit challenging two anti-voter provisions in H.B. 2332 on behalf of two nonprofit charitable organizations which engage with voters to facilitate voting by mail as a safe and secure option to exercise the right to vote. In November 2021, the team secured a preliminary injunction with a federal court temporarily blocking the challenged provisions. Following the entry of the preliminary injunction, in February 2022, the court permanently enjoined one of the challenged provisions, which prohibited the distribution of advance mail ballot applications by out-of-state persons/entities, finding that the ban violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

The Simpson Thacher team includes Partners **Jonathan Youngwood** and **Meredith Karp**, Associates **Bonnie Jarrett**, **Nicole Palmadesso**, **Nick Cunha** and **Damian Gallagher**, and Senior Paralegal **Loretta Washienko**.

Simpson Thacher and Mobilization for Justice Bring Class Action Lawsuit Against NYCDOE for Failure to Provide Timely Special Education Evaluations

Simpson Thacher filed a class action lawsuit together with Mobilization for Justice on April 17 on behalf of a group of New York City students with disabilities and their families, aiming to remedy the New York

City Department of Education’s (“NYCDOE’s”) systemic failure to provide special education evaluations to students with disabilities in a timely manner. The lawsuit, filed against the NYCDOE and NYCDOE Chancellor David C. Banks, alleges that students with disabilities in NYC face unacceptably long delays in obtaining necessary special education evaluations, exacerbating their underlying disabilities and hindering their educational progress.

The extensive delays have deprived the Plaintiffs and the proposed class of their right to a free and appropriate public education by denying them the special education services to which they are entitled. The suit also alleges that Defendants have delayed providing special education evaluations directly to students and responding to requests for independent educational evaluations (“IEEs”), and have failed to pay independent evaluators who provide IEEs for their services in a timely manner, with delays sometimes exceeding six months.

Critically, the Defendants’ excessive delays in paying independent evaluators who provide IEEs for their services has severely limited the pool of providers willing to contract with the City of New York to deliver special education services. This has a disproportionately harmful impact on low-income students, primarily of color, whose families cannot afford to pay for IEEs independently.

The Simpson Thacher team includes Partner **Michael Osnato**, Associates **Jonathan Kaplan**, **Sarah Brim**, **Wendy Wu**, **Darcy Samuelsohn** and **Jacob Fritts**.



Simpson Thacher Secures Withholding of Removal for Honduran Client in 14 Year Process

The Firm successfully represented a *pro bono* client from Honduras in obtaining a grant of withholding of removal in an individual merits hearing in Immigration Court. The client had been persecuted based on his political opinion. The client was put into removal proceedings in 2009, when the Firm’s representation began, and the Firm obtained his release from detention in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement hearing on the basis of his reasonable fear of persecution in his home country from the conspirators of the assassination. After many administrative delays, in a hearing on January 25, 2023, the Immigration Judge heard testimony from the applicant, considered the Firm’s legal arguments and ultimately granted him withholding of removal on May 4, 2023, finding that the applicant was credible and had met his legal burden of proof. The applicant’s testimony and the Firm’s legal arguments also satisfied the United States government, which did not oppose the grant of withholding of removal and waived its right to appeal.

The Simpson Thacher team included Partner **Benjamin Wells**, Associates **Josh Hazan**, **Maya Reeves** and **Benjamin Blinken**.

Palo Alto Team Assists Award-Winning San Quentin News Media Project

A Simpson Thacher team based in Palo Alto has been providing advice to Pollen Initiative (fka Friends of San Quentin News (“FoSQN”)) in its efforts to expand its rehabilitative programs. Pollen Initiative is a nonprofit organization that seeks to humanize and provide rehabilitative programs to marginalized communities, including those stigmatized by incarceration. Grown from the award-winning San Quentin News program, a transformative institution that gives inmates both a voice and vocation, Pollen Initiative is taking the San Quentin News model and expanding it across the California prison system and nation.

Associate **Jesse Feng** and Retired Partner **Buzz Frahn**, leading a team comprised of Counsel **Kevin Roe**, Associates **Marissa Lambert**, **Corina Holland**, **Sarika Pandrangi** and Staff Attorney

Wilson Li, have assisted Pollen Initiative on contract negotiation, intellectual property, non-profit and governance matters. The Palo Alto team recently attended Pollen Initiative’s Volunteer Appreciation BBQ held at Paradise Beach, CA, which overlooks San Quentin Prison.



L to R: Richard “Bonaru” Richardson, Visual Design Editor of Pollen Initiative/FoSQN and former Editor-in-Chief of San Quentin News; Jesse Feng, (Associate); Jesse Vasquez, Executive Director of Pollen Initiative/FoSQN and former Editor-in-Chief of San Quentin News; Marissa Lambert (Associate); Sarika Pandrangi (Associate)

London Office Launches *Pro Bono* and Charitable Programs in 2023

In May, the London Office hosted *Kids in Need of Defense UK* (KIND UK) to launch a new *pro bono* project assisting low income children seeking British citizenship. An estimated 215,000 undocumented children live in the U.K. today. Some are British but unable to prove it. As many as half were born in the U.K. and many have only ever known the U.K. as their home. Others are victims of trafficking and exploitation, or have fled from war. Gaining legal status in the U.K. is critical for children in order to live, work, study, travel in and out of the country, and vote. The Firm has partnered with KIND UK to represent these children and families as they navigate the U.K. immigration system.

London colleagues recently competed in the *Challenge Victory Cup*—a 5-a-side soccer tournament—and, though not a winning performance, the team put up a noble fight. Now in its 11th year, the London team comprised of associates, paralegals and business professionals returned to Power League competition in support of a youth unemployment charity, Street League. The event raised over £250,000 to help young people

across the U.K. to play sports every day, develop their employability skills, gain a qualification and find work. This year’s event was themed around the 2023 Women’s World Cup in Australia & New Zealand. Our STB MVP was Paralegal **Sophie Pasquino** who said, “I am proud to be part of such a talented, fun, and motivated team that is dedicated to making a positive impact!”



Top L to R: Sophie Pasquino (paralegal), Tom Lee (paralegal) Richard Munroe (paralegal) Lloyd Wood (associate), James Campsisi (associate); Bottom L to R: Ross Hartley (paralegal), Omar Dawood (paralegal), Sean Macdonald (associate), Neil Porter (facilities manager)

Early in June, 17 of our colleagues in the London Office successfully completed the London Legal Walk, a 10km walk from Royal Courts of Justice around the major landmarks of London in aid of free legal advice in London and the South East. Congratulations to those walkers!



The London Office also launched its 2023 Charity Partnerships with a Quiz Night in the spring raising an impressive £1250 from team entry fees. A great night was had by all 110 colleagues at the event, who, with their teams, battled to answer 10 unrelenting rounds of general knowledge and trivia. Only one team could take the crown of STB Quiz Night Champions and the winning team, a collective of lawyers and paralegals, won a haul of treats for their victory. While the evening offered a fun night for colleagues to eat, drink and compete against each other, it was also a great opportunity to hear about the work of the chosen charities, and learn how the support from the Firm will directly impact their work over the next 12 months.

The London Office will be supporting *Happy Space UK*, a charity focused on the mental health of children, which partners with schools, universities, and other institutions and professionals, to provide individuals with a mental health toolkit. The Office will also sponsor *Glass Door*, which coordinates the U.K.'s largest network of open-access services for people affected by homelessness.



Clockwise: James Campisi (Associate), Tegan Creedy (Associate), Lucy Gillett (Partner), Sean McDonald (Associate), Lloyd Wood (Associate), Oliver Heighton (Associate)



Clockwise: Leander Marks (Secretarial Manager), Kate Richie (Assistant), Kevin Hudson (Senior Receptionist), Tia Dunworth (AML Analyst) Nicola O'Connor (Assistant), Neil Porter (Facilities Manager), Janet Edwards (Assistant)

Simpson Thacher Joins NYC Mayor Eric Adams in Launch of Asylum Application Help Center

Simpson Thacher has joined with New York City Mayor Eric Adams, immigration legal service providers, and other leading New York law firms to introduce the Asylum Application Help Center, which will offer thousands of asylum seekers assistance completing and filing asylum applications as they seek a new life in the United States. Opening in the coming weeks, the Asylum Application Help Center will help thousands of asylum seekers currently in New York City apply for asylum, bringing them one step closer to being eligible for work authorization. Interested asylum seekers will schedule a one-on-one appointment at the application help center, where trained application assistants will work with the applicant to answer questions. Experienced immigration lawyers will be on site to supervise application assistants and provide guidance, and interpreters will be on site to provide in-person language assistance. The Asylum Application Help Center will operate Monday – Friday from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM in the American Red Cross Greater New York headquarters in Midtown Manhattan by appointment only.

Simpson Thacher Achieves Favorable Mid-Trial Settlement in Family Court Grandparent Visitation Case

Simpson Thacher recently obtained a favorable final order entered on consent for a grandmother who has been represented by the Firm for four years in connection with her petition seeking visits with her grandson. The settlement was reached after several days of testimony in the Family Court trial, which had commenced in 2022. Associates **Lauren Smith** and **Isabel Mattson** appeared and obtained the order, which permits the Firm's client regular contact and overnight visits with the child. The trial followed the Firm's successful appeal to the New York State Appellate Division, Second Department, of a prior Family Court order in the case, which had dismissed the grandmother's petition on standing grounds. In its decision in that appeal, the appellate court remitted the matter to the Family Court for this "best interests" hearing in light of the close relationship that the grandmother developed with

the child early in his life, which she made repeated efforts to continue to nurture. That appeal was argued by Counsel **Sarah Phillips**. The Simpson Thacher team in the Family Court and the Appellate Division also included Deputy *Pro Bono* Counsel **Susan Cordaro**, Partner **Alicia Washington**, and Retired Partner **Mary Beth Forshaw**.

Simpson Thacher Names 2023 Summer Public Interest Fellow

Summer Associate **Gineen Abueli** will be working with the ACLU of New Jersey on data privacy issues as part of her 2023 Public Interest Summer Fellowship. Gineen's work at the ACLU will focus on protecting public information, and assessing the civil rights implications of sophisticated government technology, and whether that technology has surveillance implications for residents of New Jersey. In particular, Gineen will be looking at how the state government shares information with other government agencies to surveil or target certain communities, like religious or racial minorities.

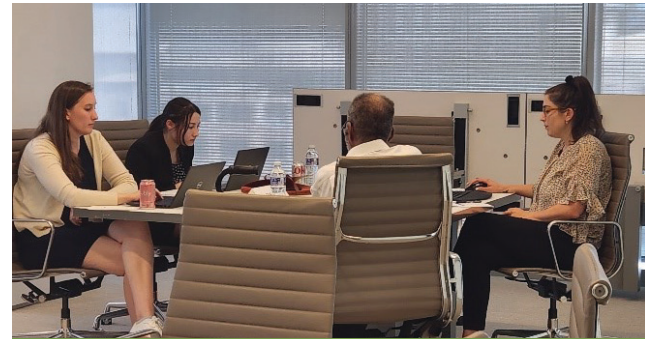


Gineen Abueli

Simpson Thacher Prepares Essential Life Planning Documents For Low-Income Seniors

In June 2023, the Firm launched two new clinics, partnering with Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) in New York and the Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE) in Washington, D.C. to prepare essential life planning documents for low-income seniors. For many seniors, having these documents in place can enable them to maintain their income and avoid homelessness, ensure that their dying wishes are fulfilled, and enable their caregivers to provide the care and services necessary for seniors to access health care and age in place. In New York, Partner **Marta Kammoun**, Counsel **Christine Marshall**, Associates **John Balletta**, **Nicolle Heagney**, **Humberto Romero Carrillo**, **Uyen Tu**, **Timothy Wang**, **Raven Wells-Scott**, and **Minaal Wickremesinghe**, and Summer Associates **Ye Joo Lee**, **Anne Mummery**, and **Robert Picciano** assisted clients in the preparation of their wills, powers of attorney, healthcare proxies,

and living wills. In Washington, D.C., Associates **Alexandra Cullen** and **Emily Singley**, and Summer Associates **Sophia Dillon-Davidson**, **Katherine Hernandez Sparkman**, **Emily Linares**, **Summer Liu**, **Jack Malich**, **Nehemiah McGowan**, **Susan Murley**, and **Victoria Schmit** assisted clients in the preparation of their wills, financial powers of attorney, and healthcare powers of attorney. Leaving both clinics, the clients were incredibly grateful to receive the support of these teams who were attentive and sensitive to their concerns



L to R: Emily Singley, Susan Murley and Sophia Dillon-Davidson in DC

Awards, Events & Mentions

Simpson Thacher Receives Pro Bono Award From The Door Legal Services

On March 30, Simpson Thacher received the Law Firm *Pro Bono* Award from The Door Legal Services, at its annual Joining in Justice event in the Rare Book Room in New York City. The award was given in recognition of over a decade of support the Firm's lawyers and professional staff have given to the organization and the young people it serves. The Firm has been staffing a weekly clinic at The Door's Runaway and Homeless Youth program since 2013. *Pro Bono* Counsel **Harlene Katzman** accepted the award on behalf of the Firm.

Founded in 1972, The Door's mission is to empower young people to reach their potential by providing comprehensive youth development services in a diverse and caring environment. The Door's Legal Services Center was established in 1992 to provide

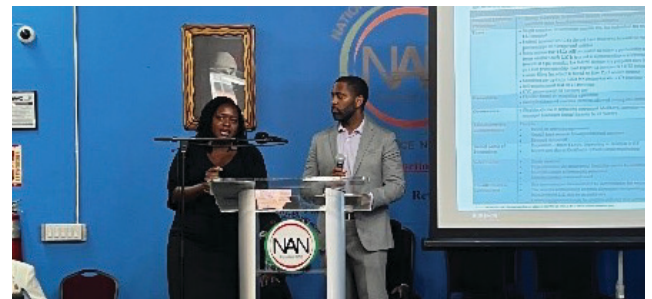
youth with legal representation and guidance in all civil legal matters, and remains one of the few providers of civil legal services for youth within a holistic youth development agency.



Top L to R: Sophie Gandler, Michael Williams (The Door), Sarah Phillips, Priscilla Hamilton, Beth Baltimore (The Door), Alicia Washington, Sara Mazurek, Suzie Kaufman; Bottom: Harlene Katzman, Susan Cordaro, Cary Milanes, Miranda Hernandez, Tim Wang

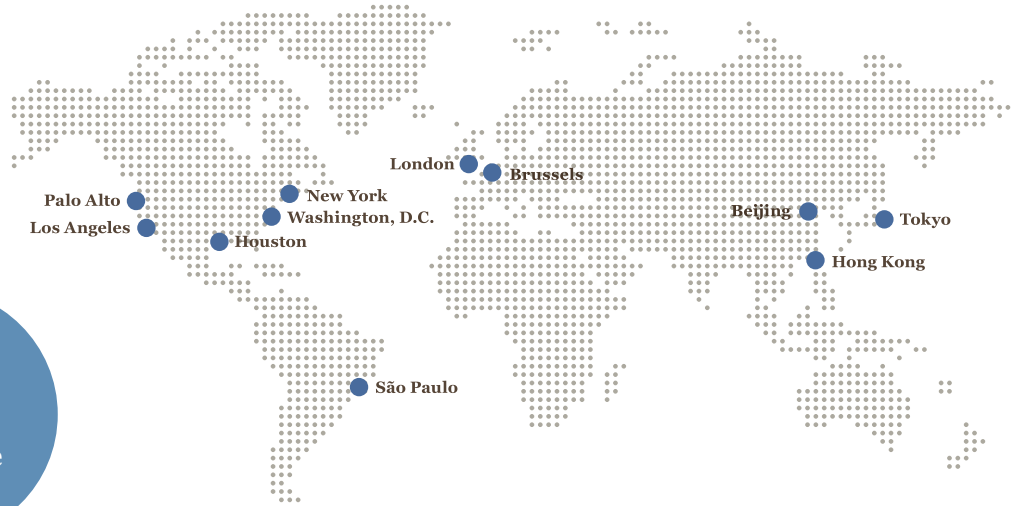
Simpson Thacher Hosts In-Person Presentation for Harlem-based Entrepreneurs

In May 2023, Simpson Thacher was invited to host a workshop on business structures as part of a Business Entrepreneurship Training Series. The four-part series, sponsored by the Harlem Community Development Center and The National Action Network, was designed to support members of the Harlem community by providing them with the fundamentals of becoming a successful entrepreneur and business owner. At the workshop, Associate **Ngozi Neziyana** and *Pro Bono* Attorney **Nadine Mompremier** presented on legal issues that sole proprietors should consider when selecting a business entity, how to determine if they are ready to form a legal entity, and how to avoid common pitfalls when considering the various entity types.



Nadine Mompremier and Ngozi Neziyana present to Harlem entrepreneurs

Please send
news items, comments
or suggestions regarding
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