



# Pro Bono Highlights 2019



Skadden

**While it is difficult to measure the far-reaching impact of our attorneys' commitment, it is possible to quantify their 2019 efforts.**

### Firmwide

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attorneys, summer associates and professional staff contributed

**239,923 hours**  
of *pro bono* work

### In the U.S.

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attorneys, summer associates and law clerks averaged

**130 hours each,**  
which accounted for  
**8.8% of billable time**



Summer associates contributed

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more than 2,350 hours on over 110 matters

### Skadden attorneys spent

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> 48,000 hours  
on immigration  
matters



> 45,000 hours  
advising 550+  
nonprofits

### We also

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counseled 100+ veterans  
through Military Mondays  
clinics



completed 850+ Innocence  
Project evaluations



advised 70+ *pro se*  
Family Court litigants



# Pro Bono Highlights

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At Skadden, our commitment to *pro bono* service extends throughout the firm. We spoke with attorneys, a retired partner and a member of our professional staff about their highlights from 2019.



**Christopher Clark**  
Counsel / Litigation / Boston

For my *pro bono* service, I look for high-impact cases that advance the law broadly or make a meaningful difference in the lives of an individual or family. In 2019, I led teams that obtained intensive nursing and medical care and access to email and phone privileges for a terminally ill death row inmate in solitary confinement, secured a settlement for a woman and her disabled daughter in an uninhabitable-conditions housing case, and filed an *amicus* brief in a suit that set an important precedent for certain immigrants facing removal. Perhaps the broadest impact came in a case that threatened the legal protections for unpaid directors of nonprofits. Our client volunteered on the board of the Roxbury Community Health Center. After the center was forced to close, about 20 former employees sued him personally for unpaid wages and treble damages. The trial court denied our summary judgment motion, and the intermediate appellate court affirmed, but we appealed all the way to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, which ruled in our client's favor. The SJC held that volunteers like our client have the right to an immediate appeal and are protected by immunity statutes unless the plaintiffs establish willful intent. The decision should discourage cases like these in the future, providing an important safeguard for people doing charitable work.



**Jonathon Egerton-Peters**  
Counsel / International Litigation and Arbitration / London

A few years ago, the Human Dignity Trust (HDT), a nonprofit that supports efforts to challenge laws that persecute LGBTQ+ people, asked if we would help them produce a first-of-its-kind report that looks specifically at the way in which trans and gender diverse people are criminalized and subject to human rights abuses globally. The project played into our strengths as a firm. More than 20 attorneys from our European, North American and Asia Pacific offices collectively spent over 1,500 hours reviewing the laws of 100-plus countries. The report, officially released in November 2019, demonstrates how trans and gender diverse people are targeted by state actors through laws criminalizing gender expression or, by conflating gender expression with sexual orientation, same-sex intimacy. It also highlights extrajudicial police abuses and analyzes how trans and gender diverse human rights are violated. We intended for the report to serve as a springboard for strategic litigation and to support lobbying efforts, and it's already gaining significant traction. HDT submitted briefings based on our findings to the United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls and to the U.K. government to consider in its potential reform of the Gender Recognition Act. It also is being used in research and advocacy efforts for trans and gender diverse people in the Netherlands, particularly in securing them refugee status.

## Pro Bono Highlights



**Andreas Kafetzopoulos**  
Associate / Antitrust-Competition / Brussels

In early 2019, New York associates **Maria da Silva** and **Tamar Lisbona** reached out to the Brussels office for help with a Hague Convention international child abduction case. They were on a team representing a woman who was accused by her abusive husband of kidnapping their children. In Brussels, we typically deal with EU law, and this case involved the intersection of Scottish and EU law. The client was a U.S. citizen who had three children with her French-Scottish husband. About two years ago, the family moved from Brooklyn to Scotland to be closer to the husband's family and to secure support services for their autistic child. The husband became physically abusive toward our client, and she fled Scotland with the children and returned to her family in Brooklyn. The husband then filed the Hague Convention petition in New York federal court seeking the return of the children. I led a team that researched, among other issues, the obligations EU law places on its member states to provide social services for disabled children who are EU nationals but residing in another member state, which related to the issue of whether the parties intended to relocate to Scotland permanently. On the eve of trial, the Skadden team brokered a favorable settlement that secured the dismissal of the case and allowed the client to remain with her children in New York subject to modest access for the children's father.



**Steve Kwok**  
Partner / Litigation / Hong Kong

In 2019, our office launched a first-of-its-kind program called Skadden Outreach, Action & Respect, or SOAR. Taking inspiration from the Skadden Fellowship Foundation, we invited local law students to submit proposals for *pro bono* initiatives that they could complete at NGOs with support from Skadden attorneys. Our inaugural winner was **Nitika Chandiramani**, from the University of Hong Kong, whose project with the Zubin Foundation seeks to help Hong Kong's ethnic minorities by promoting social inclusion and legal education. With our support, Nitika and the foundation will host "Know Your Rights" workshops focusing on employment law-related issues. In 2020, we plan to expand the program and select three proposals. I also supervise our office's *pro bono* litigation matters. Many of the cases come to us from Justice Without Borders, which provides legal aid for victims of labor exploitation and human trafficking, including domestic helpers from the Philippines and Indonesia who have been exploited by employment agencies, loan companies or the families with which they are placed. We assist these domestic workers in asserting their legal rights, including bringing claims in Hong Kong's small claims tribunal and, in some cases, working with the police to provide evidence for potential criminal prosecution.

## Pro Bono Highlights



**Sarahelena Martinez-Sosa**  
Legal Assistant / New York

I've been at Skadden for just under three years and have worked on nearly 150 *pro bono* matters. Most frequently, I've served as a Spanish interpreter on immigration matters, including asylum, U visa (for victims of crimes) and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) applications. While my primary responsibility is to allow the firm's attorneys to communicate with our clients in their native language, a big part of my role is helping to establish an atmosphere in which the clients feel comfortable sharing their personal and often traumatic stories — I try to make the process feel less intimidating. I also translate a wide range of written and verbal communications from English to Spanish and vice versa. After I'd worked on a few matters, the *pro bono* team learned about some of my other skills, and I began helping them design and produce graphics templates for use at *pro bono* events, such as our immigration clinics. *Pro bono* representation can make such an extraordinary difference in our clients' lives, and I appreciate the various opportunities I have to contribute.



**Corinne Noel**  
Former Associate / M&A and Energy & Infrastructure Projects / London

In 2011, vast reserves of oil were discovered in Kenya. Shortly thereafter, we began advising the Kenya Civil Society Platform for Oil and Gas (KCSPOG), an umbrella group for civil society and nongovernmental organizations, in connection with Kenya's efforts to update its petroleum and energy legislation, including its model production sharing contract. KCSPOG was lobbying the parliament to ensure that the new laws would benefit citizens and local communities. Our role was to benchmark best practices from existing petroleum laws in Africa and then go through each new draft of the laws and flag to the head of KCSPOG key issues relating to transparency, accountability, and protection of human rights and the environment for inclusion in his recommendations. The most heated point involved the percentage of Kenya's share of petroleum revenues that local communities would receive. Ultimately, the new law guaranteed that they will get 5%, without the restrictions and conditions initially proposed. We also focused on transparency and ethical standards, which were incorporated into the law — without those the whole system would have been flawed from the start. The law was ratified in March 2019, and we expect oil production to begin in 2022.



**Christine Okike**  
Partner / Corporate Restructuring / New York

I've been involved in immigration work since I helped handle a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) case as a summer associate. The matters span the spectrum — asylum, T-visas for human trafficking victims, U visas for victims of violent crimes, traveling to the border to represent refugees in “credible fear” interviews with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. These experiences have allowed me to assume a leadership role in our firmwide Immigration Impact Project. In addition to being a member of the New York leadership team, I'm one of the leaders of the T-visa subcommittee and a member of the U visa and VAWA subcommittees. Over the past year, I led the T-visa team's efforts to put together a comprehensive outline for human trafficking cases, which will serve as a resource for attorneys throughout the firm. In addition, I also support several nonprofits. I sit on a couple of nonprofit boards, including Lawyers Alliance — the largest provider of legal services to nonprofits in New York — and I advise organizations on issues such as corporate governance. Education and women's rights are also particularly important to me, so I try to get involved with nonprofits that address those subjects.

## Pro Bono Highlights



### **Eileen Sherman**

**Associate / Labor & Employment / Palo Alto**

The majority of my *pro bono* work falls within my practice area, labor and employment law. Skadden has ongoing relationships with numerous small businesses, and others are referred to us by local nonprofits. This past year I advised a bakery, a fitness startup, a school and a community resource center, among other *pro bono* clients. The issues spanned the spectrum, from reviewing employee handbooks to hiring and onboarding new employees. One concern about which almost everyone asks our Labor and Employment Group is employee-versus-independent-contractor classification, which is an interesting and constantly changing area of law here in California. I also have appreciated having the opportunity to counsel women in domestic violence-related matters, including domestic violence restraining order (DVROs) and custody arrangements. This past year I represented a young woman who had been experiencing long-term intimate relationship abuse. This case was more challenging than the usual DVRO — for instance, these cases are typically resolved in a single hearing, and in this one, we ultimately had four — but, in the end, our client got everything we asked for: a three-year DVRO, full legal and physical custody of her child, and a child support order. It was the highlight of my year.



### **Ron Weiss**

**Retired Partner / Trusts & Estates / New York**

I take on matters where I have subject matter expertise — trusts and estates, tax, charity — or where I find the issues particularly compelling from a legal or social justice standpoint. This past year I represented a woman whose cousin and two nieces were murdered in a homeless shelter by the cousin's husband; I helped our client get appointed as the guardian of a surviving child and secure insurance and civil settlements. I also took on an estate case for a death row inmate whose aunt died without a will, apparently leaving him as the sole heir to a house in Brooklyn. He's going to leave most of the proceeds from the sale of the house to charity, so really I'm working on their behalf. One of my oldest *pro bono* relationships — over 20 years — is with the Amadou Diallo Foundation, which provides scholarships for students of African descent, and its founder, Kadiatou Diallo — Amadou's mother. I regularly advise the foundation on all sorts of "corporate housekeeping," such as board issues and tax filings. Now that I'm no longer a partner or employed by Skadden, the firm's Emeritus Program provides the umbrella that makes all this possible — everything from malpractice coverage to administrative support and use of the tax library.



# Honors & Awards

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Don't just take our word for it. We're proud of the recognition our attorneys received in 2019 for their commitment to *pro bono* service.



## ***Pro Bono* Partner of the Year**

The Bronx Defenders

## **One of the 10 Best Law Firms for *Pro Bono* in the UK**

*Legal Week*

## **Inaugural Champion of Justice *Pro Bono* Award**

The National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

## **Ranked First for Most US Attorney *Pro Bono* Hours Completed**

*The American Lawyer's Annual Pro Bono Scorecard*

## **12 Skadden Attorneys Named Above & Beyond Honorees for Excellence in *Pro Bono* Advocacy**

Sanctuary for Families

## **Hong Kong Office and 14 Skadden Attorneys Received Distinguished *Pro Bono* Law Firm Award**

The Law Society of Hong Kong

## **Skadden and *Pro Bono* Leader Ron Tabak Honored at Volunteer Recognition and Awards Dinner**

The American Bar Association Death Penalty Representation Project

## **Katharine Krause Award**

Los Angeles' Inner City Law Center

## **Recognized for 'Outstanding Commitment' to *Pro Bono* Service**

The Chief Judges of the D.C. Federal Courts

## **Chicago Office Recognized for Work on Cases Involving the Gender Violence Act**

Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE)

## **Washington, D.C. Associate Sylvia Tsakos Presented With the Rising Star Award**

The Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project

## **Winner of Annual Associates' Campaign for 13th Consecutive Year**

The Legal Aid Society of New York

## **Counsel Jerry Lawton Honored for Efforts on Behalf of Holocaust Victims**

New York State Bar Association