

## PBF Solidarity Series

### *PBF 2001 Summer Fellow Bruce Harland*



A graduate of Rutgers School of Law, Newark, Bruce has become a shareholder at the union-side firm of Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld in Emeryville, CA. His PBF Summer Fellowship was working for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in Washington, DC. Bruce has been a panelist at PBF's National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference and assisted in welcoming new Peggy Browning Fellows during their summer work experiences in the Bay Area.

#### **What has been your career path since your Peggy Browning Summer Fellowship?**

*“After graduating from law school in 2003, I joined Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld (WRR), a union-side law firm in San Francisco, as an associate. Since 2008, I’ve been a shareholder, and since 2011, I’ve had the honor and privilege of serving as general counsel to SEIU, United Healthcare Workers –West (SEIU-UHW), a 100,000-member healthcare workers’ union in California. I pinch myself every day, because I can’t believe that I get paid to do the “work” that I do. My work consists of a little bit of everything from litigation to negotiations to arbitrations to NLRB work and everything in between. Although when people ask me what I do for a living, I try to keep it simple: I tell them that I am a “lawganizer”—something between a lawyer and an organizer. Because I think when union lawyers think like organizers, we have an advantage over our adversaries.”*

#### **Did your Peggy Browning Summer Fellowship affect your course of study in law school?**

*“Prior to law school, I worked briefly as a union organizer. I wanted to go to law school to become a union attorney. But law school, itself, was an alienating experience. Most students wanted to get big firm jobs in the summer, and I could count on one hand the number of students in my class who understood what unions were about or wanted to pursue a career in the Labor Movement. My Summer Fellowship was a life-saver, because it opened a lot of doors. As a result of the fellowship, I met some creative, smart union lawyers, who later became mentors and friends.”*

#### **Did it help you to obtain employment in labor law?**

*“Definitely. There is no doubt in my mind that my Summer Fellowship helped me obtain future employment opportunities, which started immediately after my fellowship. At that time, I was able*

*to clerk at several union-side firms during law school, which not only helped me pay for school but gave me invaluable experience. Firms that I interviewed with routinely commented on my PB Summer Fellowship, and were impressed with the program. At WRR, we have hired several Peggy Browning Alumni. I always make sure to look for a PB Summer Fellowship on an applicant's resume, because, for me, it represents the gold standard when it comes to summer clerkships."*

**What is one unique aspect about your fellowship that you would like to share with students interested in applying for a Peggy Browning Summer Fellowship?**

*"The most unique aspect was the level of involvement that the lawyers at my sponsoring organization provided. It was so much more than just legal memos and research. Everyone in that office became a family member and were positive role models and mentors to me."*

**Has the interests or goals of today's law students changed from your years in school?**

*"I'm tempted to object, and state that this answer "calls for speculation" because I feel so far removed from law school. But I think I have some insight—at least with respect to law students seeking to become worker advocates. Over the last few years, I've noticed more and more law students apply for legal jobs with union-side firms, unions, and workers' rights organizations. Having talked to some of them, it is clear that they continue to be passionate about using the law to improve the lives of working people."*

**Are you connected to other PBF Alumni? Are you active in your area's Alumni Association Chapter?**

*"I have, from time to time, participated in a number of PBF activities. In 2020, during the PBF National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference, I had the pleasure of being a panelist during the IUE-CWA/Peter Mitchell Labor Law Keynote Session and talking about Covid-19 and Essential Workers. I've also participated in some alumni lunches. My 2022 New Year's Resolution: To get more involved in PBF!"*

**What advice would you give to today's students who are considering a career in labor or public interest law?**

*"First, find a mentor or two or three – you can never have too many. We all need someone who we can lean on and learn from. Second, be yourself. We can't all be Clarence Darrow. People will trust you more if you are authentic, and not playing a character. Finally, take care of yourself. Our work can be exhausting, emotionally draining, and grinding. The battle for justice is a long road, and you need to walk down that road for as long and as far as you can. Please reach out if you ever need someone to talk to about being a union attorney or "lawganizer". You can reach me at [bharland@unionounsel.net](mailto:bharland@unionounsel.net)."*