

**American University Washington College of Law and Legal Momentum
Collaborate to form New National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project (NIWAP)**

Leslye Orloff Appointed as NIWAP Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 17, 2012 - American University Washington College of Law and Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund, are pleased to announce the creation of the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project (NIWAP), a collaborative initiative on behalf of immigrant women and children.

NIWAP will address the needs of immigrant women victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes by advocating for reforms in law and policy and providing training and technical assistance to lawyers, judges, law enforcement, social workers, and policy advocates across the United States.

Legal Momentum is the recipient of funding from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women and the Bureau of Justice Assistance to support work on issues facing immigrant victims of domestic, sexual, and other violence. The collaborative work of American University Washington College of Law, NIWAP, and Legal Momentum will be supported by these grants and by sub-awards from Legal Momentum to American University Washington College of Law. Legal Momentum's Bureau of Justice Assistance funded-work promoting U visa certification and collaboration between police, prosecutors, and immigrant victim advocates is enhanced by a partnership with the Vera Institute for Justice.

American University Washington College of Law has had a significant and long standing commitment to public interest law, women's rights, immigrant rights, and human rights. Legal Momentum has made numerous contributions to the advancement of economic and personal security for women through litigation and public policy advocacy. The collaboration between both organizations seeks to engage a greater number of lawyers both in government and among women's, victims, and immigration rights organizations across the country to benefit immigrant women and immigrant crime victims.

"Immigrant groups in America face severe exploitation, and none more so than immigrant women and children, for they are especially vulnerable in so many ways," said Professor Herman Schwartz, co-director of the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of Law. "Nevertheless, the terrible problems they faced have drawn little public attention. Those at the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law are therefore especially pleased to collaborate with our partners in this vital enterprise."

"Our national immigration policies are rife with gender bias and immigrant women are far too likely to confront poverty, violence, and exploitation," said Elizabeth Grayer, president of Legal Momentum. "For more than a decade, Legal Momentum has worked to increase the personal and economic security of immigrant women and we look forward to collaborating with American University Washington College of Law and NIWAP to continue this important effort."

As an integral part of this collaboration, American University Washington College of Law is pleased to announce the appointment of Leslye Orloff as director of the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project (NIWAP). Orloff has directed Legal Momentum's Immigrant Women Program since its inception in 1999. Her extensive experience will provide the basis for engaging a new generation of legal advocates in research, scholarship, and legal reform that address the real life challenges faced by immigrant women and their children to build safe and economically secure lives in the United States.

Through NIWAP, American University Washington College of Law and Legal Momentum will work on projects that include:

- Completion and distribution of a toolkit for judges on U visa certification in immigrant crime victim's cases.
- Co-branding of a new web-based immigrant victim resource library.
- Convening national conferences and providing technical assistance to government grantees, attorneys, advocates, police, and prosecutors on immigrant victims' legal rights.
- Filing amicus friend-of-the-court briefs in state and federal court on issues of importance for immigrant women and immigrant victims of violence against women.
- Experiential learning opportunities for American University Washington College of Law students and graduates in ongoing litigation efforts advancing the rights of women and girls.

As NIWAP Director, Orloff will also continue the successful collaboration with Legal Momentum that played a key role in the passage and implementation of the Violence Against Women Acts (VAWA) of 1994, 2000 and 2005, including VAWA's protections for immigrant victims. As new VAWA legislation is passed and new federal regulations are issued, NIWAP staff and law students will conduct legal research and develop training materials and manuals, and publish journal articles designed to help advocates, attorneys, judges, police, prosecutors, and government agency personnel implement these new legal protections in a manner that will work for immigrant women and children in communities across the country. Accompanying Orloff in this new endeavor are staff members Rocío Molina, associate director and staff attorney, and Levi Wolberg, resource coordinator and IT specialist for the project. Molina is an immigration law expert with years of experience working with police and victim advocates in her role as former staff attorney with the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

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In 1896, American University Washington College of Law became the first law school in the country founded by women. More than 100 years since its founding, this law school community is grounded in the values of equality, diversity, and intellectual rigor. The law school's nationally and internationally recognized programs (in clinical legal education, trial advocacy, international law, and intellectual property to name a few) and dedicated faculty provide its 1700 JD, LL.M., and SJD students with the critical skills and values to have an immediate impact as students and as graduates, in Washington, DC and around the world. For more information, visit wcl.american.edu.