



Michael C. Rakower Receives 2006 Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year Award

Michael C. Rakower received the New York State Bar Association's 2006 Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year Award at a reception on Wednesday, January 25, 2006 during the Association's 129th annual meeting in New York.

Albany, NY (PRWEB) February 3, 2006 -- Michael C. Rakower of Manhattan received the New York State Bar Association's 2006 Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year Award at a reception on Wednesday, January 25, during the Association's 129th annual meeting in New York.

Each year, the award recognizes an attorney who has actively practiced less than 10 years and has a distinguished record of commitment to the finest traditions of the Bar through public service and professional activities that enhance the profession and benefit the public.

"We were not only impressed with the breadth of Michael's legal endeavors—both professional and volunteer—but also with his obvious willingness to give of himself and his time to worthy causes. We view Michael as a great example to other young attorneys of the importance of being a well rounded and conscientious attorney and feel he represents the very best of the young lawyers we seek to attract to the legal profession," said the Association's Young Lawyer Section Chair Timothy A. Benedict of Rome (Office of the Corporation Counsel).

A 1993 cum laude graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Rakower earned his law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1999, where he served on the Managing Board of the "Virginia Journal of International Law."

He is now a solo practitioner in Manhattan, concentrating in federal litigation and commercial disputes. He also is of counsel to the Law Offices of Gordon Mehler and Constantine Cannon, P.C.

Rakower began his career working in the Manhattan office of Latham & Watkins, handling transactions involving stocks or bonds and representing both the banks and companies issuing the security offerings. While at Latham, he provided pro bono counseling to businesses devastated by the September 11th attacks and helping to obtain political asylum for refugees.

In March 2002, Rakower and his wife Sali, a lawyer with White & Case in its Manhattan office, took sabbaticals from their respective law firms and spent a year living in Southern and East Africa. During the final months of the trip, they worked in the prosecutor's office of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, where they assisted with the prosecutions of the perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

After returning from Africa, Rakower represented a prison inmate in a federal lawsuit against the City of New York that resulted in a six-figure settlement, including sanctions against the city. In 2004, he served as senior law clerk to Hon. Richard C. Wesley of the Second Circuit.

This past year, Rakower lectured about the Rwandan genocide and the role of international criminal tribunals at high schools in New York and Boston. He is a board member of the American Friends for the Kigali Public Library, a non-profit organization building Rwanda's first public library. He also sits on the Board of Acelero Learning Plainfield, an organization that seeks to administer a federal Head Start program to low-income families in New Jersey. A paper he wrote while in law school analyzing the Khmer Rouge regimes will be published in an upcoming compilation of essays, "To Oppose Any Foe: The Legacy of U.S. Intervention in Vietnam."

Gordon Mehler of Manhattan nominated Rakower for the State Bar award, noting that Rakower's decision to open a solo practice in Manhattan was noteworthy. "He has eschewed large salaries and the comforts of working at a well-established firm in exchange for the opportunity to represent individuals in need of his personal representation," wrote Mehler on the nomination form. "In an age where 'bigger is better,' Michael's willingness to persevere on his own is an inspiring testament to what a legal career can be."

Rakower has been a panelist for the Association of the Bar of the City of New York and a member of its Small Law Firm Committee. He also is a regular contributor to the Second Circuit Committee and the First Decade Committee of the Federal Bar Council; and maintains memberships in the Law Practice Management Section of the American Bar Association and the New York State Bar Association's Trial Lawyers Section.

New attorneys should take on as much pro bono work as possible, recommended Rakower, because "there is no better way to get experience." Pro bono work usually offers "a heightened level of responsibility, allowing young lawyers to develop their skills at an earlier stage," said Rakower. "Doing pro bono work is not only fulfilling, it makes you a better lawyer."

The Young Lawyers Section is one of 23 sections of the NYSBA. These groups publish material dealing with their fields of expertise, much of which is not available through commercial publishers. Sections also sponsor conferences, seminars and institutes, monitor legislation and conduct studies. Each of the sections contributes to policy-making, both in their subject areas and Association-wide. They originate many of the recommendations that become NYSBA policy positions and act as checks and balances of other entities.

The 72,000-member New York State Bar Association is the official statewide organization of lawyers in New York and the largest voluntary state bar association in the nation. Founded in 1876, NYSBA programs and activities have continuously served the public and improved the justice system for more than 130 years.

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