

# Sean Bertrand O'Brien

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(Resume updated July 2008)

*Sean O'Brien is a scholar and attorney specializing in international human rights law. A member of the Illinois Bar, O'Brien joined the Center for Civil and Human Rights at Notre Dame Law School in 2005, bringing with him his experience in international and domestic human rights work. He holds three degrees from the University of Notre Dame, most recently graduating summa cum laude from the Center's LL.M. program in 2002. His experience includes work with the Belfast law firm of Madden & Finucane before the Bloody Sunday Inquiry in Derry, Northern Ireland and litigation with the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) in the Inter-American System for the Protection of Human Rights. Immediately prior to his return to Notre Dame, he served as Chief Counsel for Immigration and Human Rights at the Center for Multicultural Human Services (CMHS) in Falls Church, VA, directing a legal services program for survivors of torture and war trauma.*

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## **EDUCATION**

**Notre Dame Law School**, LL.M. in International Human Rights Law, 2002, *summa cum laude*

**Notre Dame Law School**, J.D., 2001 (3.404 GPA)

**University of Notre Dame**, B.A., 1995

## **PUBLICATIONS**

*Transnational Corporate Accountability and the Rule of Law* (co-authored with Sean O'Brien), in Oliver Williams, ed., PEACE THROUGH COMMERCE (2008), pp. 77-95.

## **PRINCIPAL LEGAL EMPLOYMENT (2005-date)**

**Assistant Director, Center for Civil & Human Rights, Notre Dame Law School**, Notre Dame, IN (2005 to date)

- Manage all aspects of Center's operations and development, including admissions, curriculum, finances, and grants
- Engage in international human rights litigation and research

**Concurrent Assistant Professor of Law, Notre Dame Law School**, Notre Dame, IN (2005 to date)

- Courses taught include "Human Rights Practice" and "International Human Rights Research and Writing"

### Representative Presentations (2005-2009):

"What are Human Rights?" for Global Issues Seminar (GIS), Notre Dame, IN. GIS brings high-talent high school students to Notre Dame for a week-long academic immersion (July 2009)

"The 2009 Hesburgh Lecture: What are Human Rights and Why are They Important?" for Notre Dame Alumni Clubs of the Palm Beaches, West Palm Beach, FL, (March 2009)

“The Human Rights of Migrants and Migrant Workers,” lecture for Center for Social Concerns Migrant Seminar, March 3, 2009.

“Human Rights, Policy, and Faithful Citizenship,” lecture for the Washington Seminar Program, University of Notre Dame, September 25, 2008.

“Assessing the Roles of the International Criminal Court and the US in Darfur” for panel entitled “The International and The United States Response to the Crisis in Darfur” at John Marshall Law School. The panel was sponsored by the John Marshall Law School, the Illinois State Bar Association and the Decalogue Society of Lawyers (May 2008).

“Careers in International Human Rights Law,” Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame (February 2008).

“The Lawyers’ Movement in Pakistan” on panel “Pakistan Under Emergency: Assault on Civil Rights” at the Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, sponsored by the Kroc Institute and the Pakistani Student Association (November 2007).

“Castro-Castro Litigation in Peru,” Notre Dame Law School, February 28, 2007.

“Representing Human Rights Victims in Peru” interviewed by Amanda Golbabai, News Director, on “Notre Dame News Weekly,” Notre Dame Public Radio station WSND 88.9FM, January 29, 2007.

“International Human Rights,” Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, February 10, 2007.

“Genocide in Darfur: International Law, the Duty to Protect and Policy Options,” Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, November 28, 2006

“Careers in International Human Rights Law,” Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, February 2006.

**Pro-bono Attorney (2005 to date)**

- Litigate cases before a variety of fora, including the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, and the US immigration system.

**PRINCIPAL LEGAL EMPLOYMENT (pre 2005)**

**Chief Counsel for Immigration and Human Rights, *Center for Multicultural Human Services (CMHS)*, Falls Church, VA (June 2004 – August 2005)**

- Develop, direct and sustain bilingual, low-cost, immigration legal service program
- Represent survivors of torture and war trauma, refugees and other recent immigrants in proceedings before U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Justice
- Represent asylum applicants during all stages of the asylum process, including affirmative applications, removal proceedings and appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals
- Researched human rights country conditions in Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Liberia,

Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Colombia

- Supervise and train law student interns, as well as non-legal interns
- Supervise and train lawyers from local law firms in representing asylum clients
- Conduct outreach to immigrant and non-immigrant communities regarding immigrant rights and responsibilities
- Design and deliver workshops for mental health professionals on immigration and international human rights law
- Design and deliver presentations on immigration options for abused immigrant women
- Receive training in the mental health consequences of torture and war trauma
- Coordinate program for victims of human trafficking

*Representative Presentations (2004-2005):*

- “Immigration Options for Victims of Domestic Violence” at support group for victims of domestic violence
- “Citizenship Law” at various public schools and community organizations in the Capital area
- “Seeking Asylum in the United States” to support group for African torture survivors
- “Intersection of Law, Culture and Domestic Violence” at Conference on Domestic Violence and broadcast on Cox Cable

**Fellow and Staff Attorney, Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), Washington, D.C. (July 2002 – June 2004)**

- Represented victims of human rights violations in written proceedings before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights
- Represented clients in oral hearings before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (including “Litigation Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the European, African and Universal Human Rights Protection Systems;” “General Hearing on the Human Rights Situation of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean;” “Precautionary Measures for Petitioners Living with HIV/AIDS;” “Precautionary Measures for Juvenile Petitioners Held in Inhuman and Degrading Conditions in Paraguay;” “General Hearing on the Human Rights Situation in Honduras;” “Freedom of Association in Latin America” (with the AFL-CIO); “Labor Rights in Mexico”)
- Coordinated \$200,000 project funded by the MacArthur Foundation with Notre Dame’s Center for Civil and Human Rights (CCHR) to explore and expand the defense of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) in the Inter-American human rights system
- Traveled throughout Mexico, Central and South America, documenting cases of human rights violations and training local human rights defenders
- Participated in grant writing, report writing and fundraising efforts for the organization

*Conferences and Courses Organized (July 2002 – June 2004):*

- Organized a two-year course for 18 Latin American Human Rights Lawyers titled “Fortaleciendo la protección del derecho a la educación y del derecho a la salud mediante el uso del sistema interamericano”
- Organized week-long conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina for the course “Fortaleciendo la protección del derecho a la educación y del derecho a la salud mediante el uso del sistema interamericano”
- Organized three day international conference “La Justiciabilidad de los derechos economicos, sociales y culturales” in Mexico City, Mexico

- Organized international working group on “Litigation Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Cases” in Washington, DC
- Organized two day international conference and training for Central American labor rights lawyers on the Inter-American system in Washington, DC

Publications (July 2002 – June 2004):

- Coordinated the publication of “Construyendo una agenda para la justiciabilidad de los derechos sociales” with CEJIL and the Center for Civil and Human Rights at Notre Dame Law School
- Assisted in the writing of CEJIL publication “La Proteccion de los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales en el sistema interamericano” (published Fall 2005)

**Attorney, Pro Bono Political Asylum Representation, South Bend, IN**

February 2002 – June 2002

- Provided free legal representation to political asylum applicants during LL.M studies at Notre Dame

**Research Assistant to President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Notre Dame Law School**

June 2001 – May 2002

- Assisted Juan Méndez in his capacity as President of the Commission
- Researched comparative international human rights law
- Reviewed drafts of Commission reports written by Commission lawyers
- Researched and wrote paper on *stare decisis* in international human rights law

**Research Assistant to Director of Center for Civil and Human Rights, Notre Dame Law School**

- Assisted Prof. Juan Méndez in researching, writing and editing articles for publication
- Assisted Prof. Juan Méndez in curriculum development for regional human rights protection class and University of Oxford human rights seminar

**Human Rights Educator, South Bend, IN**

August 2001 – December 2001

- Developed and taught human rights curriculum targeted at public high school students

**Student Attorney, Notre Dame Immigration Clinic, Notre Dame, IN**

May 1999 – Dec 2001

- Supervised all immigration student attorneys in Immigration Clinic
- Represented political asylum clients during all stages of application process – including hearings before INS Asylum Officer, Immigration Judge, BIA appeals and the U.S. Court of Appeals (7<sup>th</sup> Cir.)
- Represented clients in removal proceedings before Executive Office for Immigration Review
- Researched human rights country conditions for Rwanda, Bosnia, Serbia, Chechnya, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras,
- Counseled and represented Spanish-speaking immigration clients

**Summer Associate, Notre Dame Immigration Clinic, Notre Dame, IN**

Summer 2001

- Assisted director of the immigration clinic in representing immigration clients
- Represented clients in removal and asylum proceedings

- Counseled and represented Spanish-speaking immigration clients

**Summer Associate, Madden & Finucane Solicitors**, Belfast and Derry, Northern Ireland  
Summer 2000

- Assisted firm in representing the families of victims before the *Bloody Sunday Inquiry*, the most extensive human rights inquiry in Northern Ireland's history
- Researched and wrote memos on issues of soldier immunity and venue selection
- Assisted solicitor and barrister in criminal jury trial before the High Court in Belfast

#### **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

American Bar Association

Illinois State Bar Association

- Chair, Human Rights Section Council
- Member, Diversity Task Force