

some combination of things,” Avery suggests. Real-life choice systems resemble something between neighborhood schools and a perfect-competition choice system. If schools remain sufficiently unequal, then people can afford to continue to live where they’re living. Says Avery, “It’s sort of a paradox.”

Still, the model suggests that the assumptions driving the rationale for school choice may be wrong, given a private housing market where home prices are tied to perceived school quality. Even in a best-case scenario that assumes away the other logistical frictions of school choice, the home-price force still produces unequal outcomes. “The most surprising thing coming out of that analysis,” Pathak

explains, “is the possibility that—even though you have made the lowest-quality school better—you actually haven’t helped the intended beneficiary,” whose family is priced out of that school’s district.

Perhaps this shouldn’t be surprising, because the school-choice movement treats high-quality education as a scarce resource best allocated by a free market. If good schools are a scarce resource, then only some children can access them—and they tend to come from wealthy families who find ways to game the system in their favor. “If left unchecked,” Avery says, “natural forces seem to run in the direction of making [good] schools more accessible to the wealthy.”

One reading of the busing riots that

erupted in Boston four decades ago might be as a conflict over scarce resources. Rather than ask how to distribute high-quality schools equitably, the researchers suggest, the better question may be how to create more very good schools, so that a good education isn’t a scarce resource at all. “However we do it,” Avery says, “we have to get to a point where *where* you live isn’t so connected to the quality of your school.”

—MARINA BOLOTNIKOVA

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PEDAGOGY MEETS PRACTICE

Fighting for Veterans, Learning the Law

THE LETTER ARRIVED right on time—and for Wilson Ausmer Jr., that turned out to be a very bad thing. It was 2011, and Ausmer, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, was in Afghanistan, serving his second tour of duty overseas. The decorated soldier had already paid a personal price to serve his country: he suffered from headaches, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to his time on the battlefield, and had incurred a significant foot injury as well.

The letter, mailed to his home in Missouri, contained invaluable information on how he could file an appeal for military disability compensation. It also stated that he had to respond within 120 days of receipt.

Ausmer wouldn’t return home for another five months. By the time

Daniel Nagin, faculty director of the clinic (right), and Andrew Roach, J.D. ’13, meet with a veteran in Jamaica Plain.

he read the letter, he’d lost his one chance to appeal his benefits case. The Veterans Benefits Administration wasn’t going to help him—but a trio of Harvard Law School (HLS) students did. Bradley Hinshelwood, J.D. ’14, Juan Arguello, J.D. ’15, and Christopher Melendez, J.D. ’15, took up Ausmer’s case, arguing, among other things, that the clock on an appeals claim should start only after a veteran has returned home, rather

than when a letter arrives in his or her hometown mailbox.

The student lawyers became involved in Ausmer’s case in 2013, while interning at the HLS Veterans Law and Disability Benefits Clinic, within the school’s WilmerHale Legal Services Center (LSC). Each semester since 2012, when the clinic was established in Boston’s Jamaica Plain neighborhood, about 30 students have assisted veterans with legal cases, winning verdicts of local and national importance.

Ausmer’s student defenders presented their case to a panel of three judges from the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims who were visiting Harvard as part of its annual educational outreach. The panel’s January 2014 ruling in the students’ favor marked a landmark victory. It allowed recently discharged veterans like Ausmer, whose ability to file an appeal is “materially affected”



by their service, to have 210 days from their discharge date to appeal, potentially helping thousands of former soldiers.

"Arguing *Ausmer v. Shinseki* was the highlight of my experience at HLS," says Melendez, himself a veteran who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. "I met esteemed judges,

lawyers in responding to this problem?"

Participants in the program are guided by Nagin and lawyers from the firm Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick. (Veterans' cases are referred to the clinic through the Rhode Island firm's existing pro bono program with Disabled American Veterans.) The students

says. "You're providing a compelling and unique learning opportunity for students, and also doing good in the world, trying to close the justice gap in any way you can." From the Revolutionary War until the establishment of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in 1988, he points out, military veterans who were denied benefits had no judicial recourse.

Second-year law student Travis Levrett, whose grandfather was a veteran, has spent his time at the clinic working on estate planning and wills. Veterans, he says, are often "behind on their mortgage payments, they have health issues, their benefits have been cut—getting your will together is not going to take priority." His clinic work "really hammered home to me that law is a service industry, and you really have to be available whenever your clients are."

—LAURA LEVIS

The Veterans Benefits Administration wasn't going to help him—but a trio of Harvard Law School students did.

es, set precedent, and was able to see the case through to a successful remand to the [Veterans Administration]. Because of this experience, I can head into professional life fully prepared to conduct veterans advocacy throughout the VA appeals process."

Other students have successfully backed a female marine's challenge to a Board of Veterans' Appeals decision to deny her disability benefits for military sexual trauma; ensured that a homeless Navy veteran received Massachusetts veterans' services benefits despite a prior criminal conviction; and obtained service-connected disability benefits for an Afghanistan war veteran diagnosed with cancer. "As we train students, we want to give them the opportunity to understand and appreciate the needs and sacrifices of disabled veterans," says Daniel Nagin, clinical professor of law, faculty director of the Legal Services Center, and founder of the veterans clinic. "The work is complicated and demanding—it's an uphill battle, and there are too few resources for people who need help....We are asking students to consider, 'What is the role of

can choose to represent veterans in administrative and federal court appeals that challenge denials of federal and state veterans benefits; represent clients and their families in estate- and financial-planning matters; or represent clients in administrative and court appeals that challenge denials of Social Security disability benefits.

The twin goals of the clinic—which also covers issues of administrative, disability, mental health, probate, and constitutional law—are service and pedagogy. "You're doing two things at once," Nagin

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL VETERANS

CLINIC WEBSITE:

<http://hls.harvard.edu/dept/clinical/clinics/veterans-law-and-disability-benefits-clinic-lsc>

EPOCHS OF ICE

The Science of History

IN HIS 1998 BOOK *Consilience*, Pellegrino University Professor emeritus Edward O. Wilson dreamed of a time when the boundaries between sciences and humanities would fade away, leaving an intellectually unified store of human knowledge. His vision was prescient. Today, it's possible to use isotope analysis to pinpoint the origin of a single thread of silk that traveled the Silk Road. DNA tests of ancient skeletons can reveal how people lived, ate, and died—and two years ago helped confirm the role of the Plague of Justinian in the collapse of the Roman Empire. Ice-core samples drawn from polar caps or glaciers are telling historians more than they ever believed possible about the worlds their research subjects lived in. These findings share once-inaccessible insights into the human past—and into humanity's fragile climate future.

Until recently, ice-core research was limited to Arctic regions, where abun-

dant snowfall produces a thick frozen record dating back thousands of years. Now, laser-based technology developed at the University of Maine's Climate Change Institute is sensitive enough to produce 50,000 measurements per meter—enabling researchers from UM and from Harvard's Initiative for the Science of the Human Past (SoHP) to analyze samples from the tightly packed Colle Gnifetti glacier in the Swiss Alps. Goelet professor of history Michael McCormick, who chairs SoHP, recalls a prominent Swiss climate scientist telling him, "There are no good Swiss ice cores." In fact, there were—but the technology to read them didn't exist.

Colle Gnifetti marks the first time historians have been able to look directly at weather patterns around the Mediterranean that date back nearly 2,000 years—much farther than traditional resources, like thermometer readings or tree rings.

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