Equal justice - it's in the family

When private attorneys take pro bono cases with us, sometimes it’s because they get inspired. Sometimes they like the challenge. And in some cases, it’s just in their blood.

Growing up on the northern border of Israel, Giel saw his share of injustice first hand. But it was his grandfather, a lawyer who escaped from Nazi Germany, who really inspired him to go into law.

As a German refugee, Giel’s grandfather could not speak Hebrew well enough to continue practicing law in Israel. He took a job with the sewer and sanitation department in Tel Aviv, but he never lost his love for the law. Every day, he put on a three-piece suit and carried his briefcase to the sanitation department, where he’d change into uniform for work until it was time to clock out and put on his suit again to go home.

“His love of discipline, his love of the law, and his message to me as a young boy was that the law is the first frontier against the worst kinds of injustice,” recalls Giel.

“I always wanted to walk at least a few steps in his shoes.”

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It didn’t take long to match his grandfather’s steps. Giel traveled to the United States and studied law at Northwestern University, earning a Ph.D. in sociology along the way. His studies opened up new understandings of the way the law affects communities, and the social and cultural origins of our legal system.

After graduation he joined Winston & Strawn as a litigation associate, where he discovered a passion for pro bono work with indigent plaintiffs (people without sufficient income to afford a lawyer). Giel then spent eight years as Senior Counsel and Special Assistant US Attorney with the Social Security Administration, eventually leaving public service to take a job with Clark Hill, where he currently litigates cases as a Senior Counsel. Continue reading >>