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Alumnus Profile: Santiago Canton

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dom of expression and economic pursuit, there is also determination to use natural resources more wisely."

One area in which human rights groups and environmentalists have succeeded in presenting a unified front is in the social justice arena. This field encompasses such concerns as development, peace, and poverty; issues that both camps have realized must be addressed before their own agendas can be furthered. Within this context, reform of the World Bank,

"The application of human rights law and institutions to environmental problems is really no more than a new way of thinking about well-established concepts."

seen as fundamental to the alleviation of much of the social plight of the develop-

ing world, constituted a shared agenda on which environmentalists and human rights activists combined to campaign on common ground.

The integration of the mandates of both communities, however, remains the unresolved challenge. Popovic contends that "the application of human rights law and institutions to environmental problems is really no more than a new way of thinking about well-established concepts." The same can be said for the use of environmental law to address basic human rights conditions. The refusal to adopt this new perspective, however, has led the United States and other industrialized nations to oppose the integration of environmental rights and human rights into a common agenda. They claim that the human rights plate is already overburdened and the addition of new rights would be counter-productive and would dilute the impact of current human rights and environmental protection efforts. They also question whether environmen-

tal issues can be appropriately and adequately addressed by the human rights legal regime and vice versa. Nevertheless,

"If environmental rights were formally recognized, no country in the world, neither North nor South, would be invulnerable to accusations of human rights abuses."

these nations' discomfort with the merger of human rights and environmental protection may have an alternative rationale. According to Popovic, "if environmental rights were formally recognized, no country in the world, neither North nor South, would be invulnerable to accusations of human rights abuses." ☺

ALUMNUS PROFILE

Alumnus Pursues Human Rights Through Democratization

by Karen Graziano

Santiago Canton, LL.M. '89, a native of Argentina and a graduate of the University of Buenos Aires Law School, began his career at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for International Affairs as an intern during his first semester at the Washington College of Law (WCL). Canton is now Director of NDI's Latin American Program.

As a student Canton was interested in human rights as well as international and criminal law. "This combination of interests led me directly to democratization and NDI," says Canton. "To work on promoting human rights was a goal of mine," he explains, "and now I achieve this goal every day at work."

NDI's mission is to promote democracy in concrete ways throughout the world. It currently manages democratic development programs in more than 80 countries, including 11 in Latin America and the Caribbean. NDI trains political parties in organizational skills, reviews election processes and teaches local people monitoring techniques, strengthens local governments through training programs, and seeks to improve relations between civil and military leaders. "The people in

the country request NDI training and support, and we offer them our expertise and that of people from all over the world who have had similar experiences in their own countries."



Santiago Canton with President Jimmy Carter

According to Canton, democratization in the 80's was more profound than in the past, especially in the Western Hemisphere. He explains that the distinguishing factors are the increasingly positive role of the international community, "cleaner" elections, a better understanding of the military, and, above all, the participation of local people through civic groups, which instills human rights into

the very fabric of a country's institutional structure. Canton respects people such as these who have lived with fear and oppression for decades, yet have the courage and strength to fight peacefully for democracy.

Canton's most memorable experience with NDI occurred while working with former President Carter in the Dominican Republic: "A man came up to a member of our delegation, and asked that we thank President Carter, who had saved his life by pressuring the Uruguayan dictatorship to respect human rights while he was a political prisoner. Experiences like these," says Canton, "make you realize the positive role you can play in another person's life, and motivate you to try all the harder to achieve that goal."

Six years after obtaining his LL.M., Canton looks back fondly on his experience at WCL. He attributes his own achievements to his LL.M. studies and the guidance of Professors Grossman and Goldman. "When you have the best there are in the field of human rights as your mentors, your eyes open up to a completely different world," he says. ☺