

Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice Ruth Chance Lecture Series

Presents:

Stigmatization: Struggle for Social Justice Through the Lens of Language and Disability Rights

April 6, 2009

Boalt - 140

12:45 - 1:45 p.m.



Sandra Del Valle is a senior staff attorney at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest where she specializes in the deinstitutionalization of individuals with mental illnesses, and in the provision of special education services to children that have been classified as emotionally disturbed.

She is currently prosecuting a lawsuit against the State of New York that challenges the State's practice of discharging adults with mental illnesses from state psychiatric institutions and hospital psychiatric wards into nursing homes instead of being placed in supportive community-based settings, as required under federal law. Many have been languishing in nursing homes for years. They do not have physical or medical conditions requiring care in a nursing home environment and are usually much younger than the core nursing home population. Once in the nursing homes, they are not allowed to move around freely and frequently do not receive the mental health services they need to complete a full recovery.

Before joining NYLPI two years ago, Sandra worked at the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund for 13 years where she litigated and advocated primarily in the areas of language rights, bilingual education, higher education, and the civil rights of day laborers. She is the author of *Language Rights and the Law in the United States: Finding Our Voices* and has written numerous articles on language rights and bilingual education. A new work includes a chapter in the forthcoming, *The Bilingual's Hoarse Voice: Losing Rights in Two Languages*, which will be published later this year.

In 1997, the National Association for Bilingual Education awarded her the Advocate of the Year Award.

She is a graduate of Columbia University School of Law.