



Justice firebrand

When foreign criminals try to lay low in the States, Moira Feeny and her colleagues at the Center for Justice & Accountability put a hurting on them.

BY CHRIS SMITH

PHOTOGRAPH BY
WILLIAM MERCER McLEOD

For Emmanuel “Toto” Constant, the day of reckoning was long overdue. The former Haitian death-squad leader—allegedly responsible for more than 5,000 deaths—had spent the last decade in comfortable exile in New York, but this August a couple of his victims finally got to have their say. In a packed federal civil court, two Haitian women recounted how Constant’s thugs gang-raped them in the 1990s. The judge ruled against Constant; “the devil,” as his countrymen called him, was no longer untouchable.

That the women had the chance to tell their stories in court was largely due to 31-year-old Hastings alum Moira Feeny, lead attorney on the case. Feeny works for San Francisco’s Center for Justice & Accountability, which has brought more human-rights abusers who’ve evaded punishment—from Chilean assassins to Somali generals—to heel in civil court than any other group. The center often wins multimillion dollar judgments against defendants. While collecting can be tough, “ultimately, it’s not about the money,” Feeny says. “Our clients had their day in court—that’s the goal.”

1K

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF FOREIGN-BORN TORTURERS and other human rights abusers living in the United States.

500K+

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF TORTURE SURVIVORS living in the United States.

\$140 million

LARGEST AMOUNT IN DAMAGES CJA has won for clients—in this case, from a Serbian war criminal.

\$300K+

AMOUNT CJA ACTUALLY RECOVERED from a former Salvadoran general for his role in that country’s dirty war, one of the first times in U.S. history that torture victims recovered money directly from one of their tormentors.