

Last fall, **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP**, one of our long-standing Corporate Partners, established a new litigation fellowship at inMotion. On a yearly rotation, the firm lends a highly committed associate to work full-time at inMotion under the supervision of our experienced legal staff.



We were thrilled to welcome **Rachel Braunstein**, the first Fried Frank Fellow, to our Bronx office in September. For the past seven months Rachel has litigated some of our most urgent and complex matrimonial and family law cases. Her forceful representation is bringing new hope and security to 17 clients and their families. Rachel shares the story of how one client, a victim of extreme abuse, found the inner strength to save herself and her children.

**Nakita\*** grew up in New York City. She and her husband married in 1993 and had three children who are now eight, 13 and 15 years old. Throughout the marriage her husband was physically and verbally violent toward her. Many nights he stood over and watched Nakita as she slept, exerting constant control over her.



After enduring six years of severe physical abuse and emotional degradation in her marriage, Nakita was forced to make a choice: either stay with her husband and risk being killed, or leave him in order to save her and her children's lives.

Against significant odds, she found the courage to leave her husband. One day in the fall of 1999, Nakita calmly collected her children and safely deposited them at her mother's home.

On that day, Nakita started a journey that would change her life. She drove non-stop from New York to a friend's home in Atlanta. A trip that many would find exhausting was invigorating for Nakita. She described it as a beautiful experience, giving her the time finally "to be alone and at peace." A visit to Atlanta's Martin Luther King memorial made Nakita feel even more empowered and reinforced her decision to escape her dangerous marriage. A day later, she returned to New York, picked up her children and went home. Her husband left the next day and never returned.

Nakita's journey was only just beginning. Now a single mother, she struggled to provide financially for her three children and to pursue an education. In 2001, Nakita went to Bronx County Family Court and, representing herself, petitioned for and was granted custody and child support. The Family Court also awarded Nakita's husband visitation with the children. The next step was filing for divorce. With the help of inMotion, in July 2004, Nakita commenced a divorce action against her husband in Bronx Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court referee presiding over the case ordered a hearing on the child support, custody and visitation arrangements

because it had been several years since the Family Court had decided those issues. After several months of preparation, the case was delayed by two adjournments to provide Nakita's husband, who now lives in California, with the opportunity to gather money to travel to New York. Despite these delays, Nakita was unfailingly patient and fair.

Finally, on January 25, 2006, without her husband present, Nakita testified with courage and poise, in particular regarding her desire for sole custody of her children. She described her efforts to provide a decent life for her children. Nakita illustrated her husband's failure to support the children—whom he had not seen in two years—and described his abuse of her as one of the reasons why joint custody would be harmful. After listening to Nakita's testimony, the referee granted her a divorce, child support and sole custody of her children. We were victorious!

It is inspiring to me that Nakita and many other inMotion clients possess the *will* to leave abusive marriages and that despite ominous obstacles they achieve safety and freedom. I believe this same energy and determination drives my clients to seek inMotion's assistance in rejecting their husbands' unfair terms for divorce or initiating divorce actions themselves. I strive to honor my clients' commitment by approaching my legal representation as a cooperative endeavor. In the truest sense of the word, Nakita and I collaborated in litigating this case by discussing ideas and making decisions together. Working as a team toward positive change is not only extremely rewarding for me, but ensures greater success in the litigation.

I admire my clients for being creative, focused and optimistic during their legal cases despite the harm they have suffered and I applaud them for having the courage to change their lives. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to participate in this process.

*\*Client's name has been changed to protect her identity.*