



## **Denver Law Clinic & Local Non-Profit Finalists for Public Justice’s Trial Lawyer of the Year**

June 14, 2017—DENVER— A team from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law’s Civil Rights Clinic and the Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center (CREEC), is one of four national finalists for Public Justice’s Trial Lawyer of the Year award. They have been nominated for their work on the *Anderson* and *Decoteau* cases. Public Justice presents its Trial Lawyer of the Year Award to the attorney(s) who made the greatest contribution to the public interest within the past year by trying or settling a precedent-setting, socially significant case.

The Civil Rights Clinic and CREEC brought the *Anderson* and *Decoteau* cases on behalf of men incarcerated in the Colorado State Penitentiary (CSP) who had been denied outdoor exercise for years or even decades. These men, who were locked in 90 sq. foot cells for 23 hours a day, were only permitted to exercise in an empty cell similar to the ones they live in with a narrow slit of a window and a pull-up bar. The Civil Rights Clinic and CREEC filed a lawsuit on Mr. Anderson’s behalf in 2010 claiming that the Department of Corrections’s (DOC’s) refusal to provide him outdoor exercise violated his constitutional right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment. Student attorneys under the supervision of Civil Rights Clinic faculty and CREEC attorney Amy Robertson, took the case to trial in 2012. In a written decision, U.S. District Judge R. Brooke Jackson held that the DOC’s refusal to provide outdoor exercise to the men at CSP was cruel and unusual punishment, finding that “coupled with the other conditions of administrative segregation at the CSP, this prolonged deprivation is a paradigm of inhumane treatment.”

Following the court’s decision, the DOC moved Mr. Anderson to a different prison, leaving the remaining 700 men at CSP without outdoor exercise. As a result, the Clinic and CREEC began investigating and interviewing scores of men at CSP concerning their experiences with outdoor exercise and in December 2013, filed the *Decoteau v. Raemisch* case, a class action asserting that the failure to provide outdoor exercise at CSP violated the rights of the men incarcerated there. In late 2015, the case settled with an agreement by the Department of Corrections to construct outdoor exercise yards at CSP. The yards have now been completed, and some of the men at CSP are feeling the sun on their faces for the first time in decades.

The Denver Law Civil Rights Clinic is an intensive, year-long litigation program where students represent clients in civil rights cases in federal court under the supervision of clinic faculty. CREEC is a Denver non-profit whose goal is to ensure that everyone can fully and independently participate in our nation's civic life without discrimination.

Public Justice pursues high-impact lawsuits to combat social and economic injustice, protect the Earth's sustainability and challenge predatory corporate conduct and government abuses.

The announcement of the 2017 Trial Lawyer of the Year will be made at the Public Justice Gala on July 24 at the Fairmont Copley Plaza in Boston, Mass.

*The University of Denver is committed to improving the human condition and engaging students and faculty in tackling the major issues of our day. DU ranks among the top 100 national universities in the U.S. For additional information, go to [www.du.edu/newsroom](http://www.du.edu/newsroom).*