

VOLUME LXXXI
UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
LAW REVIEW

Nilita Vientós-Gastón
Legal Writing Contest



**The Eighty-first Volume of the University of Puerto Rico Law
Review invites you to participate in its annual
NILITA VIENTÓS-GASTÓN LEGAL WRITING CONTEST**

Nilita Vientós-Gastón was a scholar, writer, journalist, and the first female lawyer to work for the Department of Justice of Puerto Rico. Born in San Sebastián, Puerto Rico in 1903, Nilita studied in the University of Puerto Rico and graduated from its Law School in 1926. In 1945, she founded and directed the literary magazine *Asomante*, which was sponsored by the Women's Alumni Association of the University of Puerto Rico. Afterward, she became the first female President of the Puerto Rican Athenaeum. In 1948, the Rockefeller Foundation granted Vientós-Gastón a scholarship to study Literature at the Kenyon College in Ohio.

After returning to Puerto Rico, the University of Puerto Rico hired Nilita as a Literature professor. At the same time, the Department of Justice of Puerto Rico hired her as an Assistant General Prosecutor, becoming the first woman to hold such a position. During the thirty years that she worked as a prosecutor, amongst other things, Nilita advocated for proceedings in Puerto Rico's local courts to be held in Spanish. In 1965, she finally achieved this goal with the decision of *Pueblo v. Tribunal Superior*.¹

¹ Pueblo v. Tribunal Superior, 92 DPR 596 (1965).

Nilita Vientós-Gastón died in 1989, but her legacy prevails to this day. In her will, Nilita entrusted a group of her friends with the task of transforming her home into a meetinghouse and a free public library. In 1996, these founded the Nilita Vientós-Gastón Foundation. Additionally, the Puerto Rico Bar Association annually honors her memory by bestowing the Nilita Vientós-Gastón medal to a person whose principles exemplify hers. In the same spirit, the University of Puerto Rico Law Review annually organizes a legal writing contest that proudly bears the name of this extraordinary attorney.

CONTEST RULES

The topic for this year's competition is:

LANGUAGE AND TRIALS IN THE FEDERAL FORUM

The use of English is currently required in the federal District Court's proceedings. This seemingly innocuous requirement can pose serious legal problems when required in multilingual jurisdictions or in cases with non-English speaking parties.

The article may argue in favor or against the use of English in the federal forum and must address one or several of the following sub-topics:

THE ENGLISH REQUIREMENT IN MULTILINGUAL JURISDICTIONS

In those multilingual jurisdictions where most of the population is non-English speaking, requiring English in the federal court's proceedings and using English speaking juries could violate certain clauses of the Constitution of the United States and different federal statutes.

Consider the case of a federal district whose population is not predominantly English speaking—such as the federal District Court for the District of the Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam or any other jurisdiction of the United States. Analyze the constitutional and statutory rights entailed by the language requirement. Argue for or against the English language requirement in the federal proceedings of said jurisdiction.

THE RIGHT TO INTERPRETERS IN FEDERAL PROCEEDINGS

As of today, the Supreme Court for the United States has not recognized a constitutional right to an interpreter. This means that a non-English speaking party will understand what happens in a federal proceeding only if the District Court exercises its discretion.

Argue for or against the establishment of a right to interpreters in federal proceedings to which non-English speakers are privies. Consider all the constitutional and statutory provisions deemed applicable.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

A panel of three judges with ample knowledge on the topic will evaluate the submitted articles.

A **\$1,000.00 USD** cash prize will be awarded to the best article, **\$500.00 USD** to the second runner-up and **\$250.00 USD** to the third-place finisher. Additionally, the articles with the highest marks will be considered by the Editorial Board for publication in the University of Puerto Rico Law Review.

SUBSTANTIVE CRITERIA

- **Subject-** The article's topic must be one of the matters included in this announcement and must be based on legal authorities.
- **Interest of the topic-** Originality, novelty, the author's point of view, and mastery of the topic will be considered. The contestant must consider who the University of Puerto Rico Law Review's audience is and if the topic has been presented in such a way that attracts and keeps the reader's attention.
- **Main thesis-** The main thesis must be clearly stated and well developed. Its discussion and elucidation must be adequate, dynamic, and follow a clear line of reasoning.
- **Research quality and citation-** All arguments and conclusions must be based on authoritative sources and observe the rules of citation.

TECHNICAL CRITERIA

- **Writing and style-** Coherence, fluidity, and clarity will be of great importance.
- **Organization-** The article's structure (introduction, body, and conclusion), paragraph length, and the use of transitory and conclusive sentences will be taken into account.
- **Legible and comprehensible-** The discussion must be continuous and the extension of the sentences must be reasonable.
- **Precise and concise-** The language and vocabulary must be on point and non-repetitive. The article's extension must accord to the complexity of the theme developed.
- **Grammar, punctuation, and orthography-** Correct language usage is of vital importance.
- **Citation-** The citation must be in compliance with the **Bluebook**.

REQUIRED FORMAT

- The article may be submitted in Spanish or English.
- The article must have a minimum of twenty (20) and a maximum of forty (40) pages, in 8.5" x 11" sized pages.
- The text must be in Times New Roman font, size 12, double-spaced, and with a margin of 1.25" on each side.
- **Citation must be according to THE BLUE BOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION (19TH ED. 2010).**

- The article must include footnotes specifying all of the used references.

ELIGIBILITY AND SUBMISSION

The submissions must be unpublished works and the **authors must be students**. There can only be one entry per participant. Submitted essays will not be returned.

The articles must be submitted via e-mail and in two formats: PDF and Microsoft WORD. To guarantee an unbiased evaluation, contestants must sign their PDF version under a pseudonym. The contest's judges and the evaluation's committee of the University of Puerto Rico Law Journal will use this version to evaluate the submission. If any winning article was also chosen for publication, the Law Journal will use the WORD version for editing and publishing purposes. The WORD version should include the following information:

- Full name
- University and state or country
- Residential and mailing address
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Pseudonym
- Title of the article

Entries must be e-mailed to the electronic address of the 81st Volume of the University of Puerto Rico Law Review: revjurupr@gmail.com. The email's subject heading shall read: "Writing Contest Entry: Nilita Vientós-Gastón."

THE DEADLINE IS APRIL 13, 2012.

Articles not observing the rules herein stated will be disqualified.

Questions or further inquiries should be directed to Tzeitel Andino-Caballero, Associate Director of the University of Puerto Rico Law Review:

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**Editorial Board
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