



**I**N THE FALL OF 2009, A UKRAINIAN INTERNATIONAL LAWYER named Oleg Riabokon (LL.M. '96) made a surprising career move. He left his job as managing partner of Magisters, a firm he co-founded more than a decade earlier, to fix what he saw as a serious problem with that country's civil rights. Since the Orange Revolution of 2004 (a successful democratic protest of an allegedly corrupt presidential election), the political situation in Ukraine has remained shaky, with billionaires taking the top government positions. Riabokon wanted to do something about it, so he ran for president of his country. "You can stand aside and say it's not your fault, or you can take some responsibility," he told a group of students gathered at the Law Center in March. Riabokon chose the latter.



Every year, hundreds of Georgetown Law LL.M. students graduate and join the ranks of alumni like Riabokon, who are taking on the world in astonishingly diverse ways. And every day, more than 10,000 LL.M. graduates worldwide — a staggering number for any law school — are applying what they've learned at Georgetown through tax or securities work in Washington, D.C., by teaching at law schools from Utah to Estonia or by pursuing impact litigation in women's rights in Cape Town,



South Africa, just to name a few of their many occupations. The school's international focus is unquestionably diverse: Students from 136 of the 192 countries in the United Nations have studied here in the last 25 years. In addition to being lawyers, LL.M. graduates have served as diplomats, politicians, government officials and judges everywhere from Brazil to Uganda.

"So many of them say they can never think about the law the same and they never think about the world the same, so it opens up a lot of different surprising avenues for them," Dory Mayer, director of International Student Services at Georgetown Law, says of the foreign LL.M.s — who comprise more than half the full-time students earning an LL.M. from Georgetown Law each year. "Many of them are totally amazed at what they are doing in five years [after graduation] because they could not have predicted it."

Like Riabokon. Though reluctant to leave the law firm he founded and helped grow into one of the top 100 firms in Europe, he dove into Ukrainian politics, learning the system even as he was running for president. Faced with a media that was still under government control and a populace that was just beginning to think in terms of a civil society, he did not emerge the winner. But he has since launched a political party called Nash Chas ("Our Time"), which will enable him to participate in future elections, and he also founded the Civil Rights Movement of Oleg Riabokon, which will work with the general public in Ukraine to promote civil society. (And yes, he does credit Georgetown Law with being the "tool and inspiration" for his achievements.)

"I don't want to live in one of the most corrupt countries in the world, where oligarchs rule," Riabokon says. "I ran for president and now stay in politics with one hope, that one day we are able to change Ukraine to a place where people can live happily."

### Making a Difference

Mushahida Adhikari (LL.M. '06) had been interested in women's rights ever since her first job as a lawyer, but it took a few years to find the right path. After graduating from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, in 2000, Adhikari worked with an NGO doing land reform work, defending eviction cases and assisting communities in getting redress for land that had been taken away under apartheid. But she wanted to do more, particularly for women.

"Fate and luck" collided when a friend sent her a link to Georgetown Law's Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa (LAWA) program, in which African lawyers pursue LL.M. degrees at the Law Center in order to promote women's rights in their home countries. Last September — after some work with a nonprofit and a few years doing commercial litigation — Adhikari found her dream job doing exactly that.

"We focus on a number of women's issues including gender-based violence, fair labor practices for women, women's health rights, housing and equal rights within relationships," explains Adhikari, who now works as a senior attorney at the Women's Legal Centre in Cape Town. "In South Africa there's a complex set of rules and customs dating back to apartheid, particularly religious and traditional

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# The LL.M.s

by Ann W. Parks



LEFT: COURTESY OLEG RYABOKOV, RIGHT: COURTESY WOMEN'S LAW AND PUBLIC POLICY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Oleg Riabokon (LL.M. '96), who ran for president of Ukraine earlier this year and Mushahida Adhikari (LL.M. '06), a participant in Georgetown Law's Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa (LAWA) program. Adhikari now works as a senior attorney at the Women's Legal Centre in Cape Town, South Africa.

marriages of people of color. The lack of legal recognition of certain marriages under apartheid still has consequences for women today."

She frequently takes on cases that will create legislative or policy changes for women: litigation to legalize Muslim and Hindu marriages in South Africa; to protect women in co-habiting relationships; to secure reproductive rights and bring justice to migrant women subjected to forced sterilization. And Adhikari says she still refers to her notes from Professor Sue Ross's class on international women's human rights — particularly those that explain how international instruments work.

"What Georgetown taught me was firstly just the ability to get to grips with complex relationships ... understanding the political and economic forces that shape the policy environment and how to use your education and your skills to access pressure points," says Adhikari. "It's [about] how to actually prepare for a meeting if you're going to make a presentation to the legislature; what to say to them; how to say things to them so your point will be listened to."

### A Life of Ideas

Lauri Mälksoo's particular audience is students — and the occasional government official. Mälksoo (LL.M. '99), the international law chair at the University of Tartu in Estonia, is one of more than two dozen Georgetown Law graduates pursuing an academic career outside the United States. He also serves as the part-time international law adviser to his country's chancellor of justice, an independent government official that ensures the constitutionality and legality of legislation passed in Estonia.

"It is true that an average professor [may seem] slightly less 'relevant' for the society than an average politician," he says. "Yet at the same time, an average professor can be much more free in his or her expressions and positions than an average politician. ... Ultimately, the reason why I wanted to become a professor may well be 'metaphysical' — to somehow make the point that life can be about ideas as much as about the material world."

After completing his LL.M., Mälksoo pursued a Ph.D. at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, before returning to the University of Tartu to teach. Last year, he became the first researcher from Estonia to receive a prestigious grant of half a million euros from the European Research

Council — to fund a project exploring the Russian Federation's understanding of international law and human rights.

Interestingly, Mälksoo says that he didn't choose Georgetown Law — the Law Center chose him. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Tartu in 1998, Mälksoo received an Edmund S. Muskie graduate fellowship, co-sponsored by the U.S. government and the Open Society Institute, to study in the United States. And while he knew that he would be sent to a highly qualified U.S. academic institution, he did not know which one.

"I was very lucky to 'get' Georgetown in that way," says Mälksoo. "Some of my fellow students from the Baltics who got scholarships to study in less known places in the United States looked at me with a certain jealousy: wow, Georgetown. At that moment, I was not even aware what those 'wow, lucky you!'s were about."

### Process of Discovery

For many, it's no easy journey. To travel halfway around the world to subject oneself to Socratic dialogue in a common law country — for some, in a foreign language — requires a considerable leap of faith.



LEFT: RICHARD SIMON, RIGHT: ANDRES TENNIS/UNIVERSITY OF TARTU



Koen Hoornaert (LL.M.'10) served as the student speaker for the 2010 LL.M. class during commencement and plans to continue his education at Frankfurt's Wolfgang Goethe University. Lauri Mälksoo (LL.M. '99) is the international law chair at the University of Tartu in Estonia, one of many LL.M. graduates pursuing an academic career.

Even for American lawyers, pursuing advanced degrees in tax or securities and financial regulation when they already have a time-consuming legal practice obviously requires balancing some serious professional, financial and family concerns; approximately one-quarter of the LL.M.s at Georgetown attend as part-time students.

Koen Hoornaert (LL.M. '10), a law student from Belgium who served as the student speaker for the 2010 LL.M. class, reflected in his commencement address on the forces that brought this group together: 426 students from more than 50 countries. "Some wanted to go to one of the best law schools worldwide and improve their legal skills; others wanted to live in the United States, get a better understanding of international relationships or just promote Belgian beer more actively in the U.S.," he joked. "I can assure you that the process of discovery of the initial reason behind pursuing the LL.M. was, to say the least, very interesting and often surprising."

Which is true for Hoornaert as well. When he was about 10 years old, he took a trip from his hometown in Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, to Geneva, Switzerland, and learned about a new organization headquartered there — the World Trade Organization, founded in 1995. For Hoornaert,

who was already hearing a lot of law over breakfast, lunch and dinner with his parents and grandfather, all civil lawyers in Belgium, something clicked.

"They have a saying in Belgium that basically with law you can go in any direction; you can go into any field later on," he says, explaining his decision to study law, and to study law at Georgetown. He pursued his Georgetown LL.M. in international business and economic law, with a certificate in WTO studies; the Belgian-American Educational Foundation, the most prestigious organization in Belgium for awarding scholarships for Belgian students to study abroad, paid his entire way. "It's the combination of a family tradition and a big interest in public international law, international relations and foreign policy basically ... and to specialize in the World Trade Organization with the worldwide authority of Professor John Jackson, it was a natural choice for me to go to Georgetown."

Now that he has his LL.M. degree, Hoornaert heads to Frankfurt's Wolfgang Goethe University to continue his education — despite several job offers from European law firms. "I decided to get my Ph.D. in financial regulation; it's a really hot topic at the moment," he says, adding

"Ultimately, the reason why I wanted to become a professor may well be 'metaphysical' — to somehow make the point that life can be about ideas as much as about the material world," Mälksoo says.

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that his ultimate goal is to combine private practice with an academic position.

### Providing Perspective

Not that there’s anything wrong with private practice. Of course, many students choose to complete an LL.M. to make them more attractive prospects to law firms — or to use their knowledge in an existing job.

Anyone searching for an antitrust/competition law attorney on the website of the Australian firm Gilbert & Tobin last spring might have come across the name of Adelina Widjaja (LL.M. ’10) with an e-mail address reading in part, “@gtlaw.” A coincidence, owing to the firm name, but an accurate one, since “at Georgetown Law” was precisely where Widjaja happened to be.

“I had reached a point in my practice where [I thought] that kind of specialized knowledge would be really beneficial,” says Widjaja, who has since returned to Sydney. She designed her own antitrust curriculum at Georgetown through the general LL.M. program and also took advantage of Georgetown Law’s externship program, putting what she was learning

in her Global Competition Law and Advanced Antitrust classes to good use at the Federal Trade Commission. A few days before graduation, she was looking forward to returning home, using what she’s learned to enhance the way she advises clients. “To use what you’ve learned in practice in classrooms and to have professors who have actually been involved in practice to explain everything, it’s just been great,” she says.

British lawyer Dominic Hulse (LL.M. ’10), who now works as an in-house counsel for a hedge fund in Washington, D.C., felt that the Georgetown Law LL.M. in securities and financial regulation was the best way to achieve relevance in the U.S. market. Classes such as “Mutual Funds, Investment Advisors and Other Regulated Money Managers” and a financial derivatives regulation seminar gave him perspective on the six years he spent in the financial services group in the London office of an international law firm.

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LEFT: RICHARD SIMON, CENTER: KRISTEN HULSE, RIGHT: BENNY MCCGRADY

Daniel Mutisya (LL.M. '10) plans to return to public international law practice in Nairobi, Kenya. Dominic Hulse (LL.M.'10) spent six years in the financial services group in the London office of an international law firm before coming to Georgetown Law. Adelina Widjaja (LL.M.'10) is an antitrust/competition law attorney in Sydney, Australia.

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Daniel Mutisya (LL.M. '10), a practitioner from Nairobi, Kenya, always wanted to practice international law — though no law firm in Kenya, as of yet, has a practice in the field, he says. In Africa generally, if a state has been sued, for example, in the International Court of Justice, parties always retain counsel from abroad. Yet Mutisya thought he definitely had what it takes to do these cases — if he had the right kind of training. He once worked on what is now Kenya's leading case on the right to travel, a case where a citizen's passport had been taken away by the government. "The case established that a passport is a fundamental right of a citizen," Mutisya says. "Before that in Kenya it was always thought that it was held at the will of the government or at the president's pleasure, so that case set new law."

Now that he has an LL.M. in International Legal Studies, he plans to return to public international law practice in Nairobi, ideally after gaining some experience

in the U.S. He has also developed a serious interest in international arbitration — so if recent talk about a center for international dispute resolution becomes a reality in Kenya, he'll be ready. "This is the right time to be there," he says.

### Class Participation

Many foreign LL.M.s say they knew they were in for something special when they first walked into a classroom at Georgetown Law and encountered an interactive teaching style that was quite different from anything they had experienced before.

Dereje Shimeles (LL.M. '10) says that it was in fact "completely different" from law school in Ethiopia, partly because of class size and partly because not all students in Ethiopia have access to all the textbooks and reference materials — so students come to class to hear the professor only. And everyone at Georgetown, he says, is respectful of others' ideas.

"Whatever kind of thought you have, [you can give] your personal opinion, your personal understanding of the issue," says Shimeles, who recently earned his LL.M.

"In the U.S. at the moment, the proposals that are being considered by Congress are the most far-reaching financial reform since the 1930s, and to have an opportunity to study that as it's happening is pretty invaluable," Hulse says.

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## Bonding in Foundations

Ask foreign LL.M. students or graduates what they enjoyed most at Georgetown Law, and you'll get a range of answers as diverse as the individuals themselves — maybe it was a particular seminar in trade. Or serving as LL.M. representative of the Student Bar Association. But by far the most frequent answer is Foundations of American Law and Legal Education — an intensive, month-long summer "boot camp" that introduces incoming foreign LL.M. students to the U.S. legal system.

"I think that was the best time that each and every one of us has had, because we got to meet each other at a social level first before we even went into the classroom," says Daniel Mutisya (LL.M. '10), who was so impressed with Foundations that he decided to run for president of Foreign Lawyers at Georgetown last year. "We bonded in such a way that made the LL.M. such a wonderful experience."

International Student Services Director Dory Mayer, who runs the program, says it's first and foremost a serious academic course — the condensed version of an American 1L program that introduces foreign students to the common law and federal systems, among other things. "It's quite intensive and challenging ... for some of the students it's their first experience with native English-speaking professors and class discussion, so for the first 10 days some of them are fine-tuning their ears and developing the courage to speak in class."

Mayer says that those who go through Foundations together tend to become so close that marriage between classmates is not uncommon — perhaps proof of the theory that people are likely to fall in love if placed in some intense situation. "I take full credit for the happy marriages in all the classes," she says.



LEFT: COURTESY DEREJE SHIMELES, RIGHT: BILL PETROS

Dereje Shimeles (LL.M. '10), who recently earned his LL.M. in global health law with a certificate in international human rights, hails from Ethiopia. Dory Mayer, director of International Student Services at Georgetown Law, with students from the Foundations of American Law and Legal Education 2008 summer program.

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Shimeles says.

in global health law with a certificate in international human rights — and is planning to continue his education in development issues. Without his fellowship in global health law at Georgetown, he said, he would have missed out on a wonderful academic and life experience. “You have the right to discuss an idea freely, and that makes you free to participate in class.”

An AIDS law and ethics seminar, taught by Professors Lawrence Gostin and Mark Dybul, also altered the way Shimeles writes, as he discovered when putting together a paper on NGO participation in a human-rights-based approach to HIV and AIDS in Ethiopia. “The kind of rigorous requirement that [the professors] provide to students in terms of writing is really helpful to students and in particular to international students,” Shimeles says.

Excellence aside, part of the difference in teaching styles is that many students come to Georgetown from civil law countries. “The civil law and the common law system have a different approach to law; you start with the text and the cases interpret the text, whereas in common law ... you really go immediately to the facts,” explains Audrey Chenesseau (LL.M.'10), who is from France. Chenesseau was so interested in learning both systems that she earned

the equivalent of two J.D.s before even coming to Georgetown Law: an LL.B. from the University of Cambridge, England (a common law country), and a second law degree, called a *Maîtrise en Droit*, from the Université Paris II - Panthéon-Assas, France (a civil law country). She then pursued a dual-degree, two-year program awarding a master's in international affairs from the Sciences-Po in Paris and an LL.M. from Georgetown. This spring, Chenesseau became one of the first five students to complete the dual-graduate program.

“It was a big contrast, especially after France, because in France you are taught a lot more to listen and read up before making up your own mind,” says Chenesseau, who hopes to work in a European law firm. “Here, from day one, you're supposed to emit an opinion, and that was a lot more stimulating.”

### Common Law Tradition

While the LL.M. degree in general is certainly not the sole way a lawyer can set himself or herself apart, “it is one of the best and most useful ways,” says Dory Mayer. In some countries, she notes, an LL.M. is perceived as necessary if a lawyer is to have a serious shot at partnership, in



LEFT: COURTESY CATHERINE F. SCHOTT MURRAY; RIGHT: COURTESY DARIA LOSHKAREVA



Catherine F. Schott Murray (LL.M.'09) decided to enroll in Georgetown's LL.M. program in taxation part-time while working as an estate planning and business planning attorney. Daria Loshkareva (LL.M.'11) is currently pursuing an LL.M. in international business and economic law.

part because it provides some familiarity with the common law tradition.

Daria Loshkareva (LL.M.'11) decided she needed an LL.M. when she was practicing law in Russia and was handed a large oil and gas project drafted under New York law.

"They were American contracts which we had never studied and the structure was foreign to me," says Loshkareva. "I'm a Russian lawyer, I'm supposed to read this, I'm supposed to understand it ... it became obvious that you can't make a really serious career without an LL.M."

An internship at the Commercial Counselor Administration of the Embassy of Russia in Amman, Jordan, and her exposure to a number of international projects in the course of her career also helped to define her choice. Loshkareva is currently pursuing an LL.M. in international business and economic law as a part-time student; she aims to graduate next year, take the New York bar and work in international corporate law. "It gives you a completely different way of looking at legal documents and at law altogether," she says of the LL.M. "Here we not only study the law — it's not just about the substance — it's more about the analysis and the issue spotting, which is crucial for being a good lawyer."

Professor Wendy Collins Perdue, who is associate dean of the graduate as well as the J.D. programs at Georgetown Law, says the program educates lawyers to function effectively in the increasingly transnational legal environment. "The Georgetown LL.M. program embodies all the strengths that make Georgetown Law unique," she says. "It brings together extraordinary students with leading scholars and practicing lawyers, it addresses critical issues of law and public policy — with courses on everything from global health to regulation of derivatives."

### Tax and Consequences

And the degree is becoming increasingly necessary at home as well. Catherine F. Schott Murray (LL.M.'09), who has practiced estate planning and business planning at Zell Law, a Virginia firm, since 2005, decided to enroll in Georgetown Law's LL.M. program part-time in 2006 to give her a more solid background and foundation in tax. She completed the program last year.

"I wanted to get the tax LL.M., because tax just overrides all the questions on both sides of what I do," Murray says, noting that on the estate side, clients typically

"I'm a Russian lawyer, I'm supposed to read this, I'm supposed to understand it ... it became obvious that you can't make a really serious career without an LL.M.," Loshkareva says.

“People want to know what kind of entity they should form if they are starting a business; or if they are selling or purchasing a business, they want to know what the tax consequences are,” says Catherine F. Schott Murray.

come through her door asking for advice on how to plan for the transfer of their estate to the next generation. And on the business planning side, too, tax always comes up. “People want to know what kind of entity they should form if they are starting a business; or if they are selling or purchasing a business, they want to know what the tax consequences are.”

Getting your LL.M. while actually practicing as a lawyer is obviously the ultimate in experiential learning — and inevitably, the coursework she was doing would often tie in with what she was working on during the day, Murray notes. The part-time students naturally gravitate toward one another, coming to school from their respective jobs — and while it certainly requires some juggling, say, to leave the law firm at 4 to get to a 5:45 class, it definitely paid off in the long run. “I wouldn’t say it was easy,” she says, “but it was three years that went by pretty quickly.”

Jacob Birnbaum (LL.M. ’10) says he realized just how important a tax LL.M. was when the director of a tax clinic he was participating in at another law school told him that to go far in the field, people

are going to want to see one, especially one from Georgetown.

It was an interesting revelation for someone who, at one point in his life, never envisioned law as a career. After graduating from Dartmouth with a B.A. in religion, Birnbaum tried his hand as a volunteer turkey farmer in Israel, a teacher in an Israeli high school, a trader on the American stock exchange and a software developer before entering Yeshiva University’s Cardozo School of Law in 2003. A stint at the accounting firm KPMG and a New York law firm followed before he realized it was time to get his LL.M. in tax.

It has made a world of difference for Birnbaum, who accepted a job with Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla in New Jersey shortly after graduation and who after a few days on the job was already diving into subjects — IRS revenue rulings in the context of partnerships — he thought he’d never see outside of a law school exam.

“Does it give me an extra edge? A zillion percent yes,” he says. “It’s sort of like having your Superman cape in the background ... it’s like asking Thor if his hammer is helping him.”



LEFT: BILL PETROS, RIGHT: ROBERT MILAZZO

Justice Dong Heub Lee (LL.M. '86) of the Constitutional Court of Korea on a 2008 visit to the Law Center. Jacob Birnbaum (LL.M. '10), who accepted a job with Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla in New Jersey after graduation.

## Connecting Abroad

Since their establishment in 2007, Georgetown's European Law Alumni Advisory Board and Asian Law Alumni Advisory Board have served as valuable resources for Law Center students, faculty and alumni overseas — whether through organizing “Corporate Counsel Institute: Europe,” hosting a Global Georgetown Forum in Beijing or celebrating the opening of the Center for Transnational Legal Studies in London.

And while board members have included J.D. and LL.M. graduates, a Georgetown parent and a School of Foreign Service alum, an interesting statistic has emerged with respect to the European Board: though fewer LL.M. students than J.D. students graduate from Georgetown every year, about 80 percent of the approximately 50 members of the European board are LL.M. graduates.

One such alumnus is Pascal Chadenet (LL.M. '88), a partner in the Paris office of Salans who serves as the European Board chair. Last year, Chadenet received one of the Law Center's five annual Paul R. Dean awards, the first LL.M. graduate to be so honored.

Of course, LL.M. graduates don't have to go to Europe or Asia to stay connected to their school. Georgetown Law's Office of Alumni Affairs and Office of Graduate Programs

are hosting LL.M.-specific networking events to benefit this significant alumni population — more than 10,000 strong worldwide, according to Alumni Director Matt Calise. A January event gave LL.M.s in New York a chance to network and mingle; a March event in Washington, D.C., gave tax LL.M.s the opportunity to meet William J. Wilkins, chief counsel for the United States Internal Revenue Service. “Our alumni have distinct needs and we're beginning to cater to them,” Calise says.

**Editor's Note:** With 10,000 LL.M. alumni worldwide, we can only write about a handful of our stellar graduates. There is so much more to say — stories about people like Dora Byamukama (LL.M. '96), elected in 2006 to represent Uganda as an honorable member of the East African Legislative Assembly of 2006; Federico Gonzalez (LL.M.'93), ambassador of Paraguay to Venezuela; Esther Mayambala Kisaakye (LL.M.'94), a justice of the Supreme Court of Uganda; Dong Heub Lee (LL.M.'86) of the Constitutional Court of South Korea; Shavit Matias (LL.M.'91), deputy attorney general of Israel; Winston Zee (L'81, LL.M.'84) with Baker & McKenzie in Hong Kong. And then there's you. E-mail your story to [editor@law.georgetown.edu](mailto:editor@law.georgetown.edu). We look forward to hearing from you.



Winston Zee (L'81, LL.M.'84) of Baker & McKenzie in Hong Kong; Esther Mayambala Kisaakye (LL.M.'94), a justice of the Supreme Court of Uganda; Shavit Matias (LL.M.'91), deputy attorney general of Israel; and Pascal Chadenet (LL.M.'88), a partner in the Paris office of Salans.