

Diversity and Inclusion at Georgetown Law Journals

This past summer, the editors-in-chief of our journals at Georgetown Law wrote to our incoming members that 2020 was a “year of reflection and radical change.” Our nation’s conscience was finally shaken by the tragic death of George Floyd, and a wave of civic activism brought awareness to the longstanding issues of injustice in policing and our penal system. Since that time, the devastation of the coronavirus pandemic has exposed deep inequalities in public health and our economy. We also experienced an election that rocked our democracy and the rule of law to its very core. A common thread in these 2020 episodes was the clearer vision they provided of the issues emanating from our country’s oldest social wound: systematic racism.

In our roles as editors-in-chief, we have sought to reflect on these global events and our capacity to cultivate a more inclusive community within our own institution. We have had honest conversations about the historic lack of representation of students of color within our publications’ membership and the journal community’s role in perpetuating inequality. We have listened to our student community regarding the impact of the 2020 summer protests and the ongoing pandemic. We have discussed harmful pedagogical practices, such as Emeritus Professor Carrie Menkel-Meadow’s use of the N-word in the classroom at the law school where she now teaches and her refusal to apologize for the deep and inevitable harm her actions caused. Through these conversations and collaboration amongst our journals, we have made commitments to promoting diversity and inclusion and reducing racial bias within the journal community.

Our class of editors-in-chief is historically diverse. In this historic year for our country and community, we have a responsibility to lead by example on diversity and inclusion. The journal community must take action—which means having hard discussions, righting past wrongs, and, most importantly, “making good by doing good.” Accordingly, we have made a collective effort to address the issues of the past in order to advance equity in the future. To quote James Baldwin, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

Below we have outlined our goals for diversity and inclusion among Georgetown journals, along with the steps we have taken this year and those that will be critical in moving forward.

Leadership: Increase diverse representation in Journal Leadership and Executive Boards.

- We have strived to ensure our Executive Board leadership includes a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.
- We will encourage journal members from diverse backgrounds, especially underrepresented communities, to pursue leadership opportunities.

Representation: Work to make sure journal membership reflects the diversity of the Georgetown Law community.

- We have sought to bolster recruitment of students from underrepresented communities. This past year we hosted a “Journals Off the Record: Diversity Edition” to provide a space for conversation about journals and honest dialogue.

- We implemented reforms to the Write-On Process, including an extended timeline and more manageable case packet to increase accessibility given the unprecedented challenges during the competition period.
- A majority of journals implemented a diversity statement or are in the process of integrating one as a component of the Write-On application. We sought to design this component so the burden did not fall disproportionately on diverse students and to make the selection process more holistic. We believe this statement is critical for helping ensure journal members bring diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to their journals—reflecting the diversity of the student body.

Culture: Advocate for the importance of diversity and inclusion with Georgetown Faculty and Journal Leadership.

- We have discussed with Georgetown Law leadership the importance of sound pedagogical practices that do not unnecessarily harm the learning experience of students of color. We have also expressed our condemnation of those associated with the university who engage in such practices without recognizing their harmful impact, and stressed the importance of accountability, improved faculty training, and guidance.
- We have expressed our support for the SBA’s Diversity and Inclusion Resolution.
- We have maintained ongoing dialogue with the Office of Journal Administration on diversity and inclusion efforts, and have partnered with them on the Write-On competition, recruitment, and other areas.

Constitutions: Include relevant language on diversity and inclusion in our respective journal constitutions.

- We have discussed the importance of making diversity and inclusion part of our journals’ constitutional structure, and will continue to collaborate on drafting language and provisions for adoption in the future.

It is our hope that this letter will not only make these initial steps visible and spur further discussion, but also help the Georgetown Journal Community internalize and build on these commitments, making diversity and inclusion part of its DNA. These are small first steps to make sure journals are part of the solution in an area where far more work must be done. But we do believe if this path is taken and pursued, our publications can better ensure that all future Georgetown students will have a chance to benefit from them and that the defining principles of our law school translate into a lived, institutional reality:

“Law is the but the means. Justice is the end.”

Signed,

The Editors-in-Chief of:

The Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics

The Georgetown Law Journal

The Georgetown Journal of International Law

The Georgetown Immigration Law Journal

Journal of National Security Law and Policy

The Food and Drug Law Journal

The Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy

Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law

Georgetown Law Technology Review

Georgetown Journal of Law & Modern Critical Race Perspectives

American Criminal Law Review

Georgetown Environmental Law Review