

OUTREACH

Women's Law & Public Policy Fellowship Program
at Georgetown Law

2019 - 2020

FALL | WINTER

No matter what stage of your career, you likely have experienced or are experiencing some of these issues: imposter syndrome; wondering if it's time to go out on your own or switch movements; and burnout.

Fortunately, WLPPFP Alumnae are willing to share their candid reflections, and offer some great advice on navigating the sometimes-wonderful-sometimes-not-so-much world of work.

Meet Our 2019-2020 Women's Law & Public Policy Fellows



Twasiima (Tricia) Bigirwa is a feminist writer, attorney and activist, who has worked tirelessly to shift public perception of women in Uganda for the past five

years. She has served as a program officer at Chapter Four Uganda since 2016, protecting the human rights of Ugandan women and LGBTQIA people. There she has developed programs and systems that monitor human rights violations and launched the now-annual Human Rights Convention. Tricia is also a staff writer at africanfeminism.com, using this platform to shift cultural and political norms that perpetuate the marginalization of African women. Tricia received her LL.B. from Makerere University in 2016. Her LAWA thesis will explore how Uganda's Anti-Pornography Act has been used to further punish women subjected to non-consensual intimate image distribution, commonly known as "revenge porn."



Tristin Brown joins the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs as the Small, Webber, Spencer Litigation Fellow. She graduated in

2015 from Florida A&M University with a BS in Public Relations, and received her J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center in 2019. At Georgetown, Tristin was the President of the Black Law Students Association and Online Editor and Special Projects Chair of the Journal of Modern Critical Race Perspectives. She spent two summers interning with the Political Law Group of Perkins Coie, LLP, where she conducted research on ethics, campaign finance, and political advertising. She has also held internships with the Advancement Project and the Federal Election

Commission. In 2018, she was selected as a Ms. JD Fellow, where she was paired with Marcia Greenberger, one of the WLPPFP founding mothers, as her mentor.



The Georgetown Domestic Violence Clinic is delighted to welcome **Bonnie Carlson** as the Clinical Teaching Fellow. Bonnie earned her B.A. in

American Studies and Studies in Women and Gender from the University of Virginia in 2009, and her J.D. from the George Washington University Law School in 2012. Bonnie's career has focused on advancing the rights of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. During law school, she held positions at the D.C. Legal Aid Society's Domestic Violence Unit, D.C. Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment, the Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project, and the Sexual Assault Legal Institute. After law school, Bonnie served as a staff attorney at Legal Services of Northern Virginia and at the ABA Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence. One of Bonnie's goals for her fellowship year is to integrate her past substantive legal work with community organizing within DC's feminist community.



LAWA Fellow **Jody-Lee Fredericks** is an attorney and women's rights advocate based in South Africa. At 13, she campaigned to end the violence eroding her

community by informing her classmates of their right to be free from corporeal punishment in school. Her dedication to improving South Africa's legal and cultural protections for women and children continues today. Jody focuses her legal work on serving indigent

women in working class and poor communities throughout the Cape Town metropolitan area. She has litigated cases that touch on central issues impacting women in South Africa such as sexual harassment, inheritance and the recognition of Muslim marriages. She served at the Women's Legal Center for twelve years, where she managed their Access to Health Care and Child Maintenance portfolios. Jody-Lee is a 2012 LL.B. graduate of the University of South Africa. Her research will focus on the implementation problems surrounding South Africa's progressive sexual harassment law.



Driven by her past experience working in the Ethiopian Family Planning Program, **Haleta Fiseha Giday** is joining the LAWA fellowship in order to

further her work to end gender-based violence in her home country. After years of service as a public prosecutor, she launched her own legal office where she assists survivors of gender-based violence. Haleta's experience as a prosecutor left her with a desire to eliminate harmful traditional practices (HTPs) that prevent women from achieving meaningful equality. Haleta is proud to serve as an Advisory Board Member for the Young African Leaders Initiative and Assistant Lecturer at Wolaïta Sodo University. Haleta earned her LL.B. from Jimma University in 2012, and an LL.M. in Human Rights from Addis Ababa University in 2017. She also obtained an LL.M. from Syracuse University in 2019. Haleta's research will focus on the practice of whipping women during rites of passage ceremonies for their male relatives as both a human rights violation and form of torture.



Blossmeli Leon-Depass

joins the National Partnership for Women & Families, where she will work to advance reproductive rights.

Blossmeli completed a B.A. in Anthropology in 2012, and a Master's in Public Health in 2014, both from the University of Florida. Upon completion of her Master's, she worked as a Public Health Associate for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, increasing access to safe, high-quality maternal health care to women in the state of South Carolina. Blossmeli graduated with a J.D. in 2019 from the City University of New York, where she served as the Managing Editor of the Law Review and Co-President of the Latin American Law Students Association. During law school, she held internships with the Center for Reproductive Rights and the Health Law Unit of the Legal Aid Society. Blossmeli wishes to spend her fellowship year deepening her understanding of the structural and cultural barriers standing between women and their access to reproductive health. While working on her Master's, she became interested in increasing access to safe, high-quality maternal health care. Blossmeli graduated with a J.D. in 2019 from the City University of New York, where she served as the Managing Editor of the Law Review.



The National Women's Law Center welcomes **Desiree Luckey** to its Health Care and Reproductive Rights team. Desiree has held internships working to

protect voting rights at the ACLU, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and the Democratic National Committee. She is a 2012 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Howard University, where she received her B.A. in sociology with a minor in Political Science. Desiree graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 2019 with a Certificate in Refugees & Humanitarian Emer-

gencies. While at Georgetown, she served as a Staff Editor on the Entertainment & Media Alliance Law Review, a Teaching Fellow, and a Research Assistant with the Office of Equity and Inclusion. Desiree holds leadership positions within several non-profit organizations, and is passionate about community service and mentoring. She looks forward to working at a multi-issue organization and bringing an intersectional lens to addressing barriers to reproductive health, rights and justice.



Prior to becoming a LAWA Fellow, **Beverly Mumbo** served as the acting Senior Legal Officer for FIDA Kenya, where she has worked to advance women's and

children's rights over a broad spectrum of issues. Operating within a system that is governed by both secular and Sharia legal systems, Beverly is interested in the intersection of religion, culture and the law. This interest has grown through her advocacy for changes in Kenya's laws surrounding inheritance. Beverly is one of Kenya's youngest leaders in the national conversation surrounding domestic and intimate partner violence. She also holds a special passion for increasing access to reproductive health care. Beverly graduated with an LL.B. from Moi University in 2013. For her LAWA thesis, she will develop a framework to regulate the practice of surrogacy in Kenya. She looks forward to mobilizing this research toward further work at FIDA upon graduating from the fellowship.



The Center on Poverty & Inequality welcomes **Nikola Nable-Juris** to its Initiative on Gender Justice & Opportunity. Nikola has worked at the

intersection of juvenile and reproductive justice since 2007, when she launched her career in Juneau, Alaska, advocating for pregnant and parenting youth. She received her J.D. from the University of

Maryland, where she reinvigorated its If/When/How chapter and interned at the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the ACLU, and the Maryland Legal Aid Bureau. Nikola's experiences have led her to focus her advocacy efforts on advancing reproductive justice, women's economic security and girls impacted by the criminal justice system. She most recently worked at the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth, leading legislative efforts across the country to ban life-without-parole sentences for children under 18. During the course of her fellowship, she plans to build upon her previous criminal justice reform work to keep girls out of the school-to-prison pipeline.



Prior to becoming a LAWA Fellow, **Connie Nawaigo** worked for over twelve years as a human rights lawyer and women's rights advocate in Zimbabwe and

Uganda. There, she has worked to lobby for and evaluate human rights, democracy, and governance through organizations such as Human Rights Network-Uganda, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) and the Urgent Action Fund-Africa (UAFA). Connie's passion is challenging the ways corporate power marginalizes women. At ZLHR Connie managed programs and developed curricula that advanced human rights and gender justice. At UAFA, Connie implemented and monitored programs on issues ranging from extractive industries to the protection of women's human rights' defenders. Connie obtained an LL.B. from Makerere University in Uganda in 2002, and a Master's in Women's Law from the University of Zimbabwe in 2012. Connie's research will focus on the lack of legal protections for women who are impacted by Zimbabwe's mining industry.

Janel George (US 2005-2006) provides some tips for Making a Career Transition Between Movements



Recently, I transitioned from working in the reproductive rights movement to the field of education. Here are some lessons I learned from making this transition in the hope of aiding those who may be considering making a similar change.

- Consider what is motivating you to transition to a new field/policy area: If you're just feeling burned out or frustrated with work that seems reactive to the political landscape, those might not be good reasons to change movements. Every movement has its challenges and limitations. Examine whether your reasons are related to your feelings about being personally effective in the work. If your reasons are more rooted in philosophical differences or related to disagreements about political tactics, consider instead a move to an organization that may operate differently in the movement. Importantly, examine whether you feel passionate about the issues that you're working on. If, overall, you're not feeling engaged or passionate (recognizing, of course, you may not feel passionate and engaged every single day), a change may be appropriate.
- Consider what the new movement may entail: Reflect on what attracts you to a different movement—are you intrigued by an opportunity to learn about new issues? Have you encountered similar issues in your current work? Do you see the intersections between the movements? Do you feel that your background and knowledge may be valuable in the new movement?
- Network: Deepen your knowledge about a different movement beyond just a superficial understanding. Be sure to speak to people working in that movement to get their honest assessments of the work, the skills required to be effective, and the landscape. You already have access to a wide network of lawyers working in a variety of fields through the WLPPFP. Reach out to alums who are working in movement that you're interested in; you may have more connections than you may realize. Even seek out advice about resume changes (some fields have resume formats and norms that may be different from what you're used to).
- Find common threads and themes: While the reproductive rights and education movements may seem unrelated, they actually share some similarities. Both address large systems and can institutionalize inequality through their operations, policies, and practices. Both provide opportunities to examine how these systems can uniquely impact individuals, such as women of color, through their practices. In addition to identifying substantive similarities, also consider common transferable skills (e.g., communication skills, advocacy skills, administrative advocacy skills) that you possess that may be valuable in a different movement.
- Be open to a change of position. As you transition to a different movement, you have to recognize that you may not have the seniority that you had in another field. Therefore, be open to a change in position or title to make the transition. Be eager to learn and gain experience in the field.

Once you've made the transition to a new field, a couple more things to consider include:

- Learn about the new movement. Carve out time to read recent key reports and attend conferences or presentations about current issues in the field. Learn about who the leading experts are in the movement. Also, find which news outlets cover the relevant issues or provide updates so that you can stay abreast of developments.
- Build a network of support. Once you have made a transition, find a supervisor or senior colleagues who can support your learning about the key issues. Be an active listener at coalition meetings and learn from partners—including learning about their particular approaches to addressing issues. Build a network of supportive partners.

One of the great things about being a lawyer is the flexibility and versatility the legal profession entails. While making a transition may not be easy, embrace the opportunity to learn about a new movement and to grow personally as a lawyer and advocate.

Lisalyn Jacobs (US 1990-1991) gives advice on some things to consider when shifting gears from working at a Non-Profit Organization to Being a Consultant

First figure out your tolerance for risk and whether you can handle it financially.

- Do NOT—unless you have a trust fund, or a spouse whose salary will cover all bases—just quit your current job and figure out later.
- It is helpful, but not necessary, to have a steady client who you know will need your services for a minimum amount of time.
- I have a mortgage and child, so knew I would need a relatively stable income. Knowing that I would be working on a multi-year project enabled me to make the leap.
- Have several month's reserve in a savings/checking account that will enable you to pay all monthly obligations. This will help sustain you if you're between projects, or need to take some time off.

Figure out ways to generate business.

- The first time I consulted, I had good friends working for foundations who could tell me who they'd funded who might have funding and need extra assistance. The second time, I was in dialogue with an organization that had just gotten a new grant and was interested in my expertise.

- Try to cultivate a few sources that you can pitch ideas to, whether policy outfits, or writing outlets. If you know you may be nearing a dry spell and have a client who's receptive to your ideas, or know of a blog or news outlet that might be open to being pitched, float some ideas to see whether you can, "create," some short-term projects between longer term gigs.
- Devote some time weekly to identifying and reaching out to prospects.

Develop some shamelessness, or a thick skin when it comes to cold calls and pitches.

- If you hear of a departure from an organization that does the kind of work that you consult on, email someone there — preferably someone senior— to remind them that you can assist with projects while they're in transition.
- Never leave home without your business card, and create a website somewhere (check out About.me or use a blog site) that details the kind of work that you do, and as appropriate, links to some examples.

The myth of "being your own boss" and pitfalls of not being on payroll.

- Consulting does not mean you have no bosses, it means you have more of them all of whom expect their work to be done on time.
- Invariably, at least once you will have multiple projects with the same deadline. Plan accordingly and don't leave things until the last minute.
- Write a clause into your contracts requiring payment within 30 days, and interest accruing thereafter. Paying contractors is not a non-profit's #1 priority, so your payments may not be made in a timely way if there's no downside to paying others before you

Know your worth.

- If you know of anyone doing consulting, try to get a sense from them of what a reasonable rate is.
- If you are consulting for a government entity and have an hourly rate that is higher than they normally pay, they will want written proof that you have been paid at that rate multiple (approximately 3x) times previously.

David Silverman (US 2010-2011) is a self-described “recovering workaholic” who experienced burnout.

She now prioritizes activities outside of work, which include parenting her 2 year old daughter, reading for pleasure, and having long phone calls to catch up with friends scattered across the country. She shares 5 Things She Wish She Had Known About Burnout BEFORE She Burned Out

You wake up feeling exhausted. Thinking about work fills you with dread. All of your coworkers are getting on your nerves. Even when you are not at work, you are preoccupied with work. Your work has become your life. Everything in life feels overwhelming.

Here's the rub: you used to not to feel this way.

What happened? You may be experiencing burnout.

Before I go further, I need to make an important disclaimer: I have significant privilege.



My identity shields me from many macro- and micro-aggressions, and as such, I was able to identify my symptoms of burnout relatively easily and then embark on my long, intentional road to recovery. To quote a tweet from @socketwench, “without enough privilege, you can't recover from burnout.”

With that noted, here are the five things I wish I had known about burnout.

1. You can't power through burnout.

Powering through is appropriate for time-bound projects, such as a conference session or a campaign with a clear end date. For work that is continual, powering through will only dig you deeper into burnout.

2. Our bodies react the same way to stress as they do fear.

Burnout is the result of too much stress over a sustained period of time. When facing stressful situations, our bodies react in the same way they do when faced with fear: in some combination of fight, flee, freeze, or fawn.

In a work setting, these reactions take different forms.

- **Fight.** People yell, argue, and confront. When experiencing burnout, they will appear angrier and more cynical than normal.
- **Flee.** People distract themselves with different, less stressful work or excuse themselves from work entirely. When experiencing burnout, they may appear to have become flakey or to have lost focus.

- **Freeze.** People will stall moving work forward and find it difficult to make decisions regarding their work. When experiencing burnout, they may appear overwhelmed and stuck.
- **Fawn.** People continue to say yes to work—no matter the cost to their health—in hopes to be shielded from future stress. When experiencing burnout, they will exacerbate their codependent relationship with work and will continue to ignore their own feelings of burnout until they hit a breaking point.

3. It is best to approach burnout in the same manner you would a physical illness or injury.

Because burnout frequently manifests itself first as a change in mental state (e.g., anxiety), it is tempting to brush it off as something that you need to “snap out of.” However, if you suspect you are experiencing burnout, it is best to approach it like you have caught a bad flu or have broken a bone. In the same way that you would take some time to rest and recover and seek help from a care provider, you should do the same here. Remember: you can use FMLA and your medical coverage for mental health care.

Similar to a physical ailment, the earlier you respond to burnout, the shorter and easier your recovery time. Early signs of burnout include feeling disengaged from work; feeling more irritable, anxious, or stressed than normal; and work taking longer to complete. Moderate burnout may include physical ailments such as getting sick more frequently than typical and experiencing insomnia. Severe burnout can result in self-harm, self-medication with drugs or alcohol, and suicide ideation.

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4. Therapy is a useful tool in working through burnout.

Every person has their own unique triggers and coping mechanisms to deal with stress. Moreover, perfectionism, people pleasing, and an inability to set boundaries—the big risk factors of severe burnout—often stem from deeper personal issues that require analysis and introspection. Therapy enables you to work through issues on an individual basis in a supportive, non-judgmental environment.

5. It is unfair to put the onus of burnout prevention and management on employees.

Most resources on burnout are geared toward employees. However, it is organizational leadership that creates an organizational culture, enforces HR policies, and sets performance expectations for employees. In the same way that managers are responsible for preventing harassment and discrimination in the workplace, managers should be held responsible for prioritizing the management of employee burnout.

This is not to say that employees have no role in burnout management. Each individual staff person is responsible for identifying their stress levels and collaborating with their manager to create a plan to address their burnout. If you are burning out, flag for your manager pronto.

If you are a people manager and you find that employees who identify as a minority within your organization are burning out at higher rates than their non-minority counterparts, you may have deeper systemic issues to address in your workplace culture. Importantly, while management should engage employees in responding to burnout culture, the responsibility to implement and shift culture cannot and should not rest on employees.

Blismeli Leon-Depass (US 2019-2020) Opens up About Overcoming Imposter Syndrome



I remember sitting in my law school's library last fall thinking about whether or not my credentials and experiences were enough to get me the Women's Law & Public Policy Fellow-

ship. All of my peers and mentors thought that I was more than qualified to take on the challenge—but I did not. I read about many of the incredible people that had been part of the program and could not imagine myself as part of the group. Perhaps this was because I was falling into the traps of the elitist legal field, but most likely, because I was self-doubting my professional worth and accomplishments. This fellowship is not the first “prestigious program” that I have been a part of—I attended a top public university for undergraduate and graduate school, I participated in one of the most recognized post-graduate public health fellowships in the country, and I went to law school at the TOP public interest law school in the country. I have clearly accomplished a lot, so why is it I felt that way a year ago and continue to feel that way now that I am here? I will attribute this something known as “Imposter Syndrome.”

The Harvard Business Review defines imposter syndrome as “a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evidence of success.” In simple terms, it is the voice in the back of your head that tells you that you are “not good enough,” “that you do not belong,” the voice that questions your qualifications and makes you feel like you are out

of place. This syndrome, for the most part, does not equate to lack of self-confidence or self-esteem. On the other hand, it's mostly experienced by high achieving, perfectionist individuals, and yes, lots and lots of women. For women of color, like myself, this syndrome is frequently amplified. This amplification often comes from being the only one in the room and feeling like you don't belong. For others, it comes from being told your entire life that you have to work harder than your White counterparts. Imposter syndrome can really impact job performance, professional growth, and most importantly, mental health. This is why it is important to recognize the factors and challenge yourself to break through it.

As I embark on this incredible fellowship opportunity, I will attack this syndrome by believing that I am meant to be here because I have WORKED hard and as a result, DESERVE to be here. This is obviously easier said than done, but I will push myself through the recognition of my self-worth. Additionally, I will challenge myself by being unapologetic to the people around me for being great. Lastly, I will work to embrace the opportunities that I have been afforded without losing sight that these opportunities have reached my door because I have EARNED them.

As women's right advocates, it is important that we use our power not only to uplift the communities that we are working for, but to uplift ourselves. Allowing imposter syndrome to get in the way of our professional growth not only debilitates us as individuals, it ultimately hinders the cause that we are all so passionately fighting for.

Alumnae Spotlight

WLPPFP Alumnae continue to make their mark on the world. Here is just a sampling of some of their goings-on.

We are very proud that **Ayaisha Agbor (LAWA 2018-2019)** was one of the inaugural recipients of the Georgetown Gender+ Justice Initiative's research grants. Her research will continue her thesis work on the rights of indigent women in Cameroon.

Check out **Justine F. Andronici's (US 2002-2003)** piece in Ms. Magazine online from October 14, 2019. It is entitled "This is the Most Dangerous Moment in Donald Trump's Cycle of Abuse."

Our own **Cindy Hounsell (US 1989-1990)** provided some great advice on staying financially afloat when serving as a caretaker in the November 2019 issue of Women's Health.

Debra Katz (US 1985-1986) was named one of Washington, D.C.'s 150 Most Powerful Women.

After two exciting years at the Danish Institute for Human Rights, **Rose Wangui Kimotho (LAWA 2009-2010)** is now pursuing her PHD in the area of business and human rights at the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland.

Rachel Kuenzi (US 2018-2019) joined Planned Parenthood in Seattle.

Jill Morrison (US 1998-1999) published *Resuscitating the Black Body: Reproductive Justice as Resistance to the State's Property Interest in Black Women's Reproductive Capacity* in the Yale Journal of Law & Feminism, Volume 31. She also presented her paper, Re-

defining the "Morehouse Man" at Georgetown University's Gender+ Justice Colloquium in October 2019.

Teresa Omondi-Adeitan (2016-2017) is the new Deputy Executive Director & Head of Programmes of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Africa. The organization works towards equality and equity in education across the continent. Teresa is tasked with leading the programs team to coordinate and provide technical support to National Chapters. This role includes fundraising, preparing detailed work programs and monitoring implementation. Some of the current active programs are; provision of comprehensive scholarships to girls from high school to tertiary level, influencing gender responsive pedagogy in schools and encouraging more girls to enroll in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. We are so proud of you Teresa!

Kendall Onyendu (US 2018-2019) is now an associate at Outten & Golden LLP, and a member of the firm's Individual Practice Group and the Whistleblower and Retaliation Practice Group.

Muluka Hussein Shifa (LAWA 2017-2018) presented her thesis on sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers at the International Discussion Forum on Peacekeeping Training in Africa hosted by the Ethiopian International Peace support Training Institutes.

David Silverman (US 2010-2011) is now the Regional Policy Manager at Airbnb.

Tristan Sullivan-Wilson (US 2018-2019) reports, "I was just offered a staff attorney position at the Weinberg Center for Elder Justice! The position is a mix of policy/advocacy work as well as some direct representation of clients in the organization's elder abuse shelter. I'm excited about the opportunity to get some real client and case experience!" Congrats Tristan!

Dunia Tegegn (LAWA 2015-2016) is "super excited" to serve as the Almami Cyllah Fellow at Amnesty International, USA. She advocates for African human rights issues within the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in the House and the Human Rights Caucus. Dunia reports, "I have so far advocated on issues concerning Nigeria, DRC, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan and Equatorial Guinea, and spoke on African issues on different events." Dunia also submitted tools on how the UPR works at the UN level and how stakeholders can report as a volunteer with the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area.

Chloé White (US 2015-2016) will be starting as a Senior Associate with the Public Safety Performance Project at the Pew Charitable Trusts, working on community supervision (parole, probation, furlough, etc.) reform. She reports that she is glad to be able to continue the criminal justice reform work that was her focus as the Policy Director of the Vermont ACLU.