

OUTREACH

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

2021

SPRING | SUMMER



How it Started...



... and How it's Going!

Introducing WLPPFP/LAWA Salons: A COVID Silver Lining



Beverly Mumbo, LAW 2019-2020

When COVID 19 hit, our lives were shaken up. Here in Kenya, not only was movement restricted, but access to information curtailed. As the virus kept ravaging nations, human rights violations increased, and service delivery strategies had to change to accommodate the new working environment. Because we were all learning how to manoeuvre within the pandemic, we faced numerous challenges and developed best practices.

The idea of hosting WLPPFP/LAWA Salons was born after I participated in a successful virtual learning and adaptation series at FIDA Kenya, where I work. The series brought together a variety of audience members with

different perspectives. This diversity resulted in an extremely productive and enlightening conversation. I immediately thought of the wealth of resources and information WLPFPs and LAWAs must have to share.

With the current limited access to information and fatigue resulting from lock-downs, few people have the energy to wade through volumes of paper to catch up with new laws and policies, unless it is purely for work. What better way to catch up with the ever-evolving legal human rights world than through virtual salons? I also thought it would be exciting to have a strong LAW/LWPPFP network for mentorship and not to mention the potential funding opportunities that may arise from the salons.

Our first salon was held on June 25th to discuss Lawyering in the Post-Covid World. I must say it was a success and I look forward to the upcoming salons. It was very interesting to listen to different perspectives from different parts of the world. Working dynamics have drastically changed. Some have had to strike a balance between parenting and being a fulltime employee or employer. The reality of virtual working spaces and limited human contact has been received with mixed emotions. Most on the call appreciated the ability to work from home. It was surprising to learn that for some, the work environment did not change at all; if anything demands for their services increased and required longer working hours in more challenging conditions. The discussion also touched on challenges arising from the new normal that effect both individuals' ability to effectively participate at work and an organization's ability to operate at its optimum.

With the end of the pandemic being unknown, it is inevitable that organizations and individuals must change tactics and adopt to the current working trends. Organizations are likely to have to adopt a hybrid system of work as it is now obvious that one does not need to show up to the office to complete assigned tasks — a bitter pill to swallow for employers with utility bills to settle, but what to do? Ms. Rona is here with us and is not keen on leaving.

My So-Called DC Fellowship

Malorie Palmer, US 2020-2021



The first time I considered applying for a fellowship was on a plane home from a conference in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. I attended as a co-presenter with my law professor and mentor. We had spent five days bouncing between presenting on two papers we had written together, eating our weight in gelato, and admiring the city's architecture. I had never been out of the country before, and everything felt fun, free, new, and exciting. On the final leg of our trip, we were talking about what an amazing opportunity it had been. She suggested I keep learning and traveling, and that a fellowship might give me exactly that option after I finished law school. I started searching for the right fellowship as soon as classes started back up that fall and immediately stumbled onto the website for the Women's Law & Public Policy Fellowship. I figured it might be a long shot, but a year in DC doing the work I've been dreaming of doing was worth trying for.

About a month and a half after I got the call that I was being offered a spot as a fellow, my sister, brother-in-law, and their two boys moved next door. About a week later, everyone was under stay-at-home orders, and I was realizing I would be finishing my JD and MSW from my living room, where I subsequently took all of my finals; graduated; studied for,

took, and found out I had passed the bar; and was admitted to practice. It did not feel fun or free or new or exciting. To friends and family, I described it as an "out with a fizzle, not a bang" experience.

In the middle of studying for the bar exam, I also took the single most stress-inducing trip of my life in the form of an Indiana-to-DC road trip to apartment hunt for my fellowship year. Almost anything that could go wrong went wrong. I was ready to make the trek back to Indiana discouraged and anxious and wondering how I was going to make it work to move myself 600 miles away in the middle of a pandemic while I had several vulnerable family members I was more and more reluctant to leave.

On my last day of that trip, I got a chance to meet with the COO of Aequitas, my fellowship placement organization. I'm not exaggerating when I say I left that meeting in tears, deeply relieved. She was warm, kind, and understanding. She apologized that my trip had been so difficult and assured me that the organization was working from home already themselves, assessing the situation along the way. While they'd love to have me in person in DC, they were easily able to accommodate me working from home from Indiana for as long as I needed, even if it was the whole year.

Thus began my DC-based fellowship – in rural Indiana.

I suppose I had originally expected a year of touristy weekend trips to every monument and museum, navigating getting groceries home on the metro, and thrifting as much professional attire as I could fit in the least expensive studio apartment I could find. Instead, I wore out my favorite pair of sweatpants from the new "office" in my living room and held my newborn nephew on my lunch breaks. And I

can't be the only one who paired leggings with a professional shirt or blouse on more than one occasion for Zoom meetings.

Being home with my family meant a lot of good things. When my father was hospitalized for a non-COVID-19-related health issue, I wasn't nearly 600 miles away, worried about how to get home. When my mother's car broke down, we were able to share a vehicle for the week. I got to watch my nephews learn and grow and play. I got to be a part of meal times and bath times and playing blocks and trains and hide-and-seek. My sister and I grew closer than ever and perfected our fresh, mix-free margarita recipe.

Hardly any of it was what I expected, including how all of it is coming to a close.

I started job searching with about five months left of my fellowship. As is right on target for me, I went into the fellowship year with a plan of exactly what I would do next when the fellowship ended, down to the people I would likely be interviewing with for the job I hoped to take. That plan slipped away over the year, for numerous reasons. I interviewed for a similar position anyway when the opportunity became available, but I left that interview feeling deeply uncomfortable about the position and decided I did not want it. Feeling rather untethered at that point after finally confirming for myself that the original plan was being scrapped, I spent the next week or so sending out resumes and applications to any office where I thought I could see myself being at least somewhat satisfied.

Inspiring, right...?

And then I remembered.

About five years ago, right as I was about to start my dual JD/MSW degree, a non-profit residential center for women exiting sexual

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Heather T. Chidarara (LAWA 2020-2021)



If someone had told me in November 2019 when I was applying for the LAWA fellowship that there would be a global pandemic which would make me attend the fellowship virtually, I would not have believed them. Despite this, the fellowship exposed me to many opportunities I never thought I would have access to.

I would be lying if I say that I did not experience any challenges during my fellowship year. They were plenty of challenges, from dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, transitioning into the US education system, zoom fatigue, culture shock, to quickly learning how to network. The challenges, however, were outweighed by the highlights.

My first highlight was the support I received from Professor Jill Morrison. She is heaven sent. She has been supportive from when I started applying for the fellowship until now. Her patience and dedication to assist LAWAs throughout their journey is unimaginable. I had an advantage which most LL.M. students did not have in that I had someone I could call out for help anytime. The LAWA Seminar class improved my writing and oral skills tremendously. Though it was a lot of work, I managed to successfully attend to our paper presentations and finalized my LAWA thesis. The class helped me to be a step ahead of my other seminar classes. For example, we were taught how to reference using the Bluebook early on.

The virtual seminars with the US fellows were also a highlight. Our seminars were always eventful. Either we learnt something new, or we had very thoughtful discussions. I was amazed by the enthusiasm shown by US fellows to know more about our countries when we had our country presentations. The online games with the US fellows and the book club made me feel welcomed as I got to know more about the US culture, comparing it to my African one.

When I left South Africa, I was a girl who thought her dream of an Africa which views women as equal to men was impossible. My experience as a LAWA fellow exposed me to a world where though not quite there yet, women have been fighting for their rights for years. I will be going back to Africa with a new vision that believes it is possible for women to be treated equally to men; it only takes me and other women continuing with the fight one step at a time.

WLPPFP mourns the loss of Christine Jahnke. Christine helped many classes of LAWA Fellows prepare for their presentations. Her speaking tips helped the Fellows to find their own unique style so their brilliance would shine through. More importantly, she instilled in each person she worked with the belief that they had something important to convey to the world. Her dynamic presence will be sorely missed.

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exploitation was breaking ground, about fifteen minutes down the road from my home. I remember thinking, "Wow, they might need a lawyer like me some day."

I pulled up their website around the end of May this year, looking for a "jobs" or "employment opportunities" tab. Finding nothing, I decided to reach out anyway. I introduced myself via their "contact us" page, told them what I was looking to do, and how I might be helpful to their work. They responded the next morning.

Three and a half weeks later, I accepted the position as the new director of their residential program. I'll begin working there in September to expand their program, create partnerships, and build a legal team to help these women fight unjust criminal charges, expunge any prior convictions, and any other legal needs they may have.

Or at least, that's the plan. But we've seen what happens when I make plans, so I'm expecting something even better than I could have dreamed.

Alumnae Spotlight

WLPPFP Fellows are not the type to let a pandemic slow them down! Here is just a sampling of WLPPFPs and LAWAs new positions, publications and community service.

Tina Alai (LAWA 2012-2013) had an article published in *Journalists for Justice* on the case filed against Kenya's government for failing to investigate and prosecute acts of sexual violence following the 2007-2008 election. The high court ruled in the victims' favor.

Abiodun Baiyewu (LAWA 2007-2008), Executive Director Global Rights Nigeria, was featured in a News Central piece on the rule of law.

The WLPPFP family wishes **Carol Beier (US 1986-1987)** a happy and well-deserved retirement from the Kansas Supreme Court.

Twasiima (Tricia) Bigirwa (LAWA 2019-2020) joins the Segal Family Foundation to manage their Uganda portfolio and office. She is excited to invest in building community and advocating for more sustainable models of development and philanthropy.

Tristin Brown (US 2019-2020) is now the Policy & Program Director at the People's Parity Project.

Bonnie Carlson (US 2019-2020) has been named Assistant Professor of Law at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia.

Megan Challender (US 2015-2016) is now the Managing Attorney of Support & Legal Advocacy for Youth (SLAY) at the Network for Victim Recovery of DC.

Rebecca Epstein (US 1996-1997) of the Center on Poverty and Inequality's Initiative on Gender Justice and Opportunity hosted

Critical Conversations: Adulthood Bias Against Black Girls.

Holly Fuhrman (US 2016-2017), Senior Associate Attorney Advisor at Aequitas, was featured prominently in an article in *Vice* discussing marital rape.

Georgetown Law welcomes **Janel George (US 2005-2006)** as the Founder and Director of the Racial Equity in Education Law and Policy Clinic. She will be ably assisted by Clinical Teaching Fellow **Nikola Nable-Juris (US 2019-2020)**.

Joanna L. Grossman (US 1995-1996) wrote an article for *Justicia* entitled, *Joe, Joey, Joe-Baby, Sexist: Where's Your Imposter Syndrome?* about resistance to using Dr. Jill Biden's title. She also co-authored a piece on the Britney Spears conservatorship case.

Margaret Johnson (US 1995-1996) (virtually) hosted the always-fantastic Applied Feminism Conference. WLPPFP was well represented; **Shanta Trivedi (US 2020-2021)**, **Deborah Brake (US 1990-1991)**, and **Joanna Grossman (US 1995-1996)** were all featured panelists.

The Ugandan judiciary is in excellent hands. **Pamella Lamunu (LAWA 2015-2016)** reports that she, along with **Juliet Hatanga (LAWA 2014-2015)**, was promoted to Deputy Registrar. Congratulations Your Worships!

Michelle Liu (US 2018-2019) will be joining the Human Rights Institute at Georgetown Law as the next Dash-Muse Fellow. Congrats Michelle!

Dunia Mekonnen (LAWA 2015-2016) is working at the ABA with **Mooya Nyaundi (LAWA 2012-2013)** to identify due process and fair trial violations in Ethiopia. Dunia also co-founded *Empowergirlsnow*, which focuses on distributing menstrual supplies to girls in Africa and Latin America.

Jill Morrison (US 1998-1999) wrote a chapter on Reproductive Justice in the American Bar Association's *Whose Choice Is It? Abortion, Medicine, and the Law*, 7th Edition.

Beverly Mumbo (LAWA 2019-2020), was selected for the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa Program and will be participating in the Civic Leadership programme in Cohort 42. Beverly also published editorials on rape culture in Kenya, and reproductive health during the COVID crisis.

Prudence Mutiso (LAWA 2017-2018) reports, "I joined the Center for Reproductive Rights in October 2020 as a Legal Advisor for the Africa region. In my new role, I litigate and provide technical support on access to sexual and reproductive health information and services."

Juliet Nyamao (LAWA 2017-2018) published an editorial in *AfricLaw* entitled *Accelerating Efforts to Combat the Rise of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Kenya.*

Agata Pelka (US 2014-2015) is now a Legislative Analyst with the HRSA Bureau of Health Workforce.

Dawn Philip (US 2007-2008) is currently the Equity and Inclusion Clinical Supervisor at Swarthmore College's Counseling Center, with a private practice in Philadelphia.

Aparna Polavarapu (US 2010-2011) reports, "I have recently launched the South Carolina Restorative Justice Initiative. SCRJI's mission is to educate and promote dialogue about restorative and transformative justice as well as to facilitate the development of restorative practices in South Carolina. To that end, we have educational programs designed to teach people about restorative and transformative justice and to prepare them to develop their own restorative practices. We also provide assistance to those organizations and actors seeking to incorporate restorative practice into their work. I continue to work in the international and comparative space as I study the global practice of restorative justice, and SCRJI will reflect that as well."

Jasmine Sankofa (US 2015-2016) is now Policy and Research Manager, Criminal Justice Reform at FWD.us, where she is managing decarceration campaigns in Arizona and Oklahoma. jasmine was also appointed

the inaugural Activist-in-Residence at the University of San Diego's Kroc School of Peace Studies, housed within the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice.

The *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law* featured panels with **Jane Stoeber (US 2004-2005)**, **Jill Morrison (US 1998-1999)**, and **Twasiima (Tricia) Birgirwa (LAWA 2019-2020)**. Tricia is also having her LAWA thesis on nonconsensual image distribution published in the forthcoming issue.

Shanta Trivedi (US 2020-2021) has been named Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Baltimore School of Law and faculty director of the Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts.

Chloé White (US 2015-2016) is now Policy Counsel at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

Pela Boker Wilson (LAWA 2017-2018) has been confirmed by the Liberian Senate as a Commissioner for the Independent National Human Rights Commission. Pela will serve for a tenure of 5 years. Congratulations Pela!



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After almost a full year of only virtual bonding, the 2020-2021 Fellows finally gathered to take in some DC sights.