

A photograph of two women in an office setting. The woman in the foreground is a young woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a grey button-down shirt, smiling broadly at the camera. To her left, another woman with dark skin and braided hair is partially visible, also smiling. They appear to be working together at a desk with a laptop.

WOMEN'S LAW & PUBLIC POLICY
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

GEORGETOWN LAW

WOMEN'S LAW & PUBLIC POLICY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

“The Women’s Law & Public Policy Fellowship Program continues to play an exemplary role in developing internationally-minded leaders in the quest for women’s equality and human rights.”

**The Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Associate Justice, US Supreme Court**

The Women’s Law & Public Policy Fellowship Program (WLPPFP), founded in 1983, recruits talented and committed US and international women’s rights attorneys and brings them to Washington, DC for a year. All fellows participate in bi-weekly seminars which include substantive leadership and professional training. During their time in Washington they also attend relevant Supreme Court and Congressional hearings and meet with Members of Congress, national and local women’s rights leaders, and public interest lawyers. The deep relationships the Fellows build with each other, alumnae of the Program, and local, national, and international leaders during their Fellowship year provide a rich resource upon which to draw throughout their careers.

US Fellowships

The US Fellows work for organizations involved in legal and policy issues affecting women. Almost 300 women and men have participated in the Program, serving as Fellows at over 60 public interest organizations. A list of the issues the Fellows have tackled includes domestic violence, access to healthcare, sex discrimination and harassment in the workplace, and the problems of women in prison, women in poverty, and women with disabilities.



LAWA Fellowships

The Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa (LAWA) Fellowship Program, founded in 1993, provides advanced training to women's human rights lawyers who are committed to returning home to their countries in Africa to work to promote equality, justice, and the rule of law. Over 100 women's rights lawyers from the following countries have participated in the LAWA Program: Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. In addition to earning a Master of Laws (LL.M.) degree at Georgetown Law with a focus on women's human rights, the LAWA Fellows complete a major graduate paper on a women's rights issue relevant to their home country and have the opportunity to gain practical experience working with a local organization to advance women's rights.

What Our Fellows Accomplish

Alumnae of both Programs now constitute a powerful national and international network of women's rights advocates. They are using their training to promote equality and justice through their positions as legislators, judges, litigators, law professors, and leaders of non-profit organizations. Many LAWA alumnae have collaborated with Georgetown faculty and law students in the International Women's Human Rights Clinic to work together on cases and issues in order to change laws and policies to improve the lives of women and children in Africa. Here we share the stories of some Fellowship Alumnae and those who have supported them.



Global Advocacy for Women Living with HIV

BERI HULL, PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR



The International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) is a global advocacy network run by and for women living with HIV. One of our major supporters, the Ford Foundation, recognized that ICW's important advocacy work would benefit from the talents of an attorney. Since 2007, a Georgetown Women's Law & Public Policy Fellow has used her skills to amplify the voices of HIV positive women throughout the world. When faced with staff cut-backs at ICW, the WLPPFP Fellow has been my partner in making sure that ICW is present in many of the critical spaces where women living with HIV are essential, and would otherwise be absent. We were able to do the networking and outreach for the organization, allowing us to expand our network throughout Africa, North America and the English-speaking Caribbean.

Each WLPPFP Fellow plays a role in many aspects of our organization's current work and future development. This has included editing statements to the United Nations and governments, reviewing regulations, supporting the implementation and analysis of consultations with ICW members, training women living with HIV to document human rights abuses for class action suits, and providing the legal support on a number of administrative needs, including the transition of our headquarters from Argentina to Nairobi. The Fellows support the activism and leadership of women living with HIV, and help to bolster their experiences into policies and programs that improve our lives. After their year with ICW, most WLPPFP Alumnae go on to careers in HIV/AIDS advocacy, legal services and public health policy. Their continued commitment is a testament to the Fellowship Program, and the strength of our movement. Both make me very proud.



Bringing Human Rights Home

HILARY GBEDEMAH, LAWA 1995-1996



For me, the uniqueness of the program is its international perspective on women's rights and application to our local circumstances, "making the global, local". Everything from the LAWA Fellowship Program has enhanced my work from the community level through to the international arena. On my return home, no longer did I confine myself to Ghana's laws and Constitution. I invoked the human rights instruments ratified by Ghana, and I felt empowered to hold my country to its international commitments to improve the lives of women and girls.

I have joined with other LAWA Alumnae in Ghana to improve the lives of our sisters. Our Alumnae Association was one of the first NGOs to submit a draft Bill to the Attorney General on the Property Rights of Spouses, and our innovative provisions on polygamy have been adopted. The training we received at Georgetown was also instrumental to our advocacy on laws effecting Sexual Harassment, Domestic Violence and the Property Rights of Spouses. The 2003 Labour Act of Ghana forbids discrimination based on the presence of a hostile work environment only because LAWAs from Ghana studied the subject comprehensively at Georgetown and noticed that it had not been included in the draft.

Today, I am privileged to work not only at the community level, but also at the international level as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which is responsible for the monitoring and implementation of CEDAW. What I learned during my fellowship year still benefits me in my current position. The LAWA Program gave me new dimensions on familiar subjects and insights into completely new subject areas. My classes helped deepen my understanding of the scope of non-discrimination and substantive equality, which is central to the Committee's assessment of compliance with the CEDAW. The lectures and seminars of Professors Sue Ross, Wendy Williams and Anne Goldstein on disparate impact and affirmative action are reflected in the CEDAW Committee's efforts to require structural change and transformative equality.

The Fellowship has without doubt ultimately impacted my approach to women's rights implementation at the domestic and local level; input into policy and legislation at the national level; as well as monitoring compliance and adherence by states to international conventions at the global level, and I believe all these entities are enriched by my exposure to the Program.



Highlights throughout the fellowship year include: a ropes course retreat, tea with Justice Ginsburg, a briefing on Capitol Hill where the LAWAs present their theses, and of course, graduation. Fellows also have the opportunity to organize their own events as well. One fellow with a passion for running organized a 5K for team "LAWAs Run the World."



Training Effective Leaders

ALICE KINYUA, LAWA 2013-2014



My LAWA fellowship year gave me an opportunity to continue doing what I love and believe in. I undertook research on barriers faced in the quest for justice for victims of sexual violence. I identified challenges faced by custodians of justice in prosecuting and convicting cases of sexual violence in Kenya. This allowed me to further the work of Many Hopes, an organization that works in home country to lift abused and neglected children out of poverty.

With my research findings I was able to identify and propose areas in which Many Hopes could intervene to support the prosecution process. We organized a number of events in New York, Washington DC and Boston where we raised money that will go to prosecute cases of sexual violence against children. Our LAWA Seminar helped shape my research and presentation skills, allowing me to clearly articulate and communicate the findings to potential donors. I also enrolled in a poverty reduction class that gave me insight on how to build better programs to help break poverty cycles in Kenya. With knowledge and skills learned from this class I was able to set better strategies of combatting poverty that will help break insidious cycles.

I was most surprised by how the LAWA Program improved my comfort with public speaking. This has allowed me to do the critical work of representing Many Hopes. I spoke in three forums where we raised money to build a school to help 800 children discover and explore their potential, meeting 90% of our target. We also raised funds to establish a home for boys rescued from violence and other forms of exploitation. We are currently raising money to build a community clinic. My participation in the LAWA Fellowship Program has been a success for Many Hopes, and the children we serve.



Defending Human Rights for Latinas in the US

ANGELA HOOTON, US 2003-2004



I was placed at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), where I had the opportunity to utilize a gender-based lens and focus on the specific barriers—both structural and legal—that impede far too many Latinas in the US from exercising their fundamental civil, political, and human rights. Through my work at MALDEF I was exposed to many new legal issues, such as language access discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and the restrictions on certain groups of immigrants to access health care under federal and state law, all of which deepened my growing expertise in reproductive rights law and the intersectionality of these issues for communities of color.

More than ten years later, I am now the Vice President for Policy & Advocacy at the Center for Reproductive Rights, a global human rights organization, where I lead our efforts to advance policy and advocacy strategies at the federal, state, and local level. The strategies that I engage in every day at work are the same ones that I was first introduced to during my fellowship year at MALDEF.

The Fellowship provided me with the critical set of tools, knowledge, and relationships I needed to launch my career in the reproductive rights, health, and justice arena as a policy advocate. I also greatly benefited from the support, education, and enrichment opportunities provided by the Fellowship and the other fellows from the US and LAWA programs. I owe a lot of my career trajectory and accomplishments to the Fellowship program, which helped shape the advocate I am today.



Protecting Women from Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

DEBRA KATZ, US FELLOW, 1985-1986



During my Fellowship year, I had the extraordinary good fortune to work on the case of *Meritor Savings v. Vinson*, the landmark US Supreme Court case that addressed the issue of whether sexual harassment was a form of unlawful sex discrimination. As the most junior lawyer on a team of legal luminaries like Marcia Greenberger, Judy Lichtman, Marcia Berzon, and Kitty MacKinnon, I was given responsibility to draft portions of key amicus briefs and to work with the primary drafter on the respondent's brief. I got to observe first-hand how a group of brilliant, committed advocates could devise a winning legal strategy, make unassailable arguments, and transform the law by achieving a unanimous decision that established the right of women to work in an environment free of sexual harassment.

Shortly after my fellowship year, I founded a small civil rights law firm that specialized in the representation of employees in sexual harassment and discrimination cases. I'm proud to say that 30 years later, my firm is one of the most successful employment discrimination firms in the country and the largest plaintiff-side employment law firm in Washington, DC. I would not have been in a position to establish this firm, nor would the firm have thrived as it has over these decades, had I not developed critical relationships with other women's rights lawyers during my fellowship year who encouraged me and inspired me to fight the important battles.

Over the years we have hired alumnae of WLPPFP because they invariably prove themselves to be the brightest, most dedicated, and knowledgeable recent law school graduates you can find. I feel much gratitude for the Fellowship program, because without it, I would not be where I am today.



Supporting Fellows Working to Fight Poverty

JUDGE DAVID DAVIDSON, FELLOWSHIP SUPPORTER



I am Judge David Davidson, and I am a proud supporter of the Women's Law & Public Policy Fellowship Program. Both my wife Rita and I have long been advocates for a range of social justice issues, especially economic justice. Although Rita had most recently been a Judge on the Maryland Court of Appeals, she had previously served in the Governor's cabinet as Secretary of what was then the Department of Employment and Social Services. There she became very familiar with the problems of her clients, predominantly women heads of single parent families struggling to find the means to maintain and rear their families. She became a zealous champion for them.

After Rita died, family members and friends wanted to create some kind of memorial that would keep alive her memory and at the same time relate to some of the things that she felt passionately about. We became aware of the Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship Program at Georgetown, and decided to support fellows who are working to improve the lives of women struggling with poverty. It seems hard to believe that it is 30 years since Rita died, and that the Fellowship has been in existence almost that long. We are so proud that many of those Rita Charmatz Davidson Fellows continue to serve social justice organizations. Nothing could be more gratifying to her family and friends as a means of honoring her memory.

Sample of Annual Programs & Events

SEPTEMBER

- Seminar: LAWA Country Introductions
LAWAs present the key issues of women's human rights in their home countries
- Fellowship Welcome Lunch with Alumnae
- Fall Fellowship Retreat at Terrapin Adventures, ropes course

OCTOBER

- Seminar: Reading State and Federal Legislation
Gretchen Borchelt, WLPPFP 2002-2003
Leila Abolfazli, National Women's Law Center
- Dinner with the Director for US Fellows Only: A Conversation on "Managing Up"
- Lunch after class with the LAWAs: A check in on how classes are going
- Discussion: Take a US Fellow to Class/Take a LAWA to Work
US fellows will arrange to attend a class with a LAWA, and LAWAs will make arrangements to spend ½ day at a US fellow's placement site
- Seminar: HIV Disclosure Laws and Criminalization
William McColl, Political Director, AIDS United

NOVEMBER

- National Women's Law Center Annual Awards Dinner (Fellows Volunteer & Attend)
- Discussion of Summer internships for LAWA Fellows: selecting, applying and interviewing
- UNFPA Seminar: A Conversation on Leadership with Non-profit Executive Directors
Sarah Craven, WLPPFP 1992-1993, UNFPA
Regan Ralph, WLPPFP 1992-1993, Fund for Global Human Rights
Jessica Gonzales Rojas, Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
Kierra Johnson, Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
- Lunch after class with the LAWAs: Keeping finals in perspective

DECEMBER

- Fellows attend Supreme Court Argument
- Seminar: How to Give a Great Speech, Part I
Chris Jahnke, author of *The Well-Spoken Woman*
- Dinner with the Director for US Fellows Only: Seeking feedback and getting the experiences you want during your fellowship
- Seminar for US Fellows Only: What's Next? Post-Fellowship Job Search Strategies with WLPPFP Alumnae

FEBRUARY

- Effective Editorials and Social Media Use
Sui Lang Panoke, Founder/ Director, Women Politics Media
- Seminar: Domestic Violence in DC
Professor Deborah Epstein, Director, Georgetown DV Clinic, WLPPFP 1990-1991, followed by a courtroom visit
- Dinner with the Director for US Fellows Only: Identifying what you want from your next job, and how to get there

MARCH

- Seminar: How to Give a Great Speech, Part II
Chris Jahnke, author of *The Well-Spoken Woman*
- Seminar: Rita Charmatz Davidson Lecture on Women & Poverty
Joan Entmacher, Vice President of Family Economic Security, National Women's Law Center
- International Women's Day Symposium with Human Rights Action-Amnesty International organized by Fellows
- USAID Briefing on LAWA papers in progress

APRIL

- Seminar: Harriet Burg & Lisa Small Lecture on Removing Barriers to Women with Disabilities
Joy Levin Whelan, WLPPFP 2009-2010, US Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
- LAWA Congressional Briefing, LAWAs present their thesis topics to Congressional staffers, NGOs and Embassy staff
- Seminar: The Legal, Medical and Ethical Issues Surrounding Female Genital Cutting
Dr. Crista Johnson, Founder and Director of the Refugee Women's Health Clinic, Maricopa Integrated Health System
Fuumbai Ahmadu, Ph.D., Co-founder of African Women are Free to Choose
- Dinner with the Director for US Fellows Only: Making a lasting impression in the last months of your fellowship

MAY

- WLPPFP and LAWA Graduation Celebration
Brunch at Busboys & Poets with family and friends
- Seminar: Social Justice Lawyering
Anita Sinha, American University, Washington College of Law

JUNE

- LAWA Summer Internships Commence
- National Partnership for Women and Families Annual Luncheon (Fellows Volunteer & Attend)
- Tea with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg
- Seminar: Advocates' Reports (US Fellows report on highlights of their work during their fellowship year)

JULY

- Lunch with the LAWAs: Checking in on your Summer Internships
- Welcome Party for the incoming LAWAs and Clinic Teaching Fellows at Deborah Epstein's House
- Seminar: Improving the Fellowship Experience
Reflections on the year

AUGUST

- Summer Retreat: Miniature Golf at H Street Country Club
- Dinner with the Director: Judging Success



LAWAs Contributions on Campus and Beyond

SUE ROSS, PROFESSOR OF LAW



I have worked closely with the Leadership & Advocacy for Women in Africa Fellows since they first arrived at Georgetown Law in 1993, when I was both the Director of the Fellowship Program and a Professor teaching a new course in International and Comparative Law on Women's Human Rights. LAWA Fellows who are current LL.M. students play an important role in educating our J.D. students in that course. From domestic violence in Ghana to FGM in Uganda, they provide a continual source of information on how human rights

instruments are improving the lives of women and girls.

In my clinical course on International Women's Human Rights, the LAWAs also help the Clinic students prepare for their fact-finding missions in various countries across the African continent. The LAWAs role-play women and girls facing serious human rights abuses, while the students figure out how to get the information they need while being sensitive to cultural norms. This preparation ensures that our students are making the most of their time in-country and building the trust necessary for effective partnerships.

My Clinic students, fellows, and I have frequently partnered with LAWA alumnae since the beginning of the International Women's Human Rights Clinic in 1998. Together, we have worked on projects in Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Uganda that apply human rights treaty obligations to shape convincing arguments for legal change. The LAWA alumnae then proceed in domestic courts or before their national legislatures to win victories. They have achieved many successes since, such as new laws protecting women from domestic violence and employment discrimination in Ghana, and court decisions striking down discriminatory inheritance and divorce laws in Uganda. They are powerful agents of change in the struggle to achieve women's human rights and fill me with pride at their many accomplishments, creativity, drive, and courage.



Contact us for more information

For further information about the program and application process, please visit:
www.law.georgetown.edu/wlppfp.

Women's Law & Public Policy Fellowship Program

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