

OUTREACH

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

2022-2023

FALL | WINTER



IMPACT!

**MEET THE WLPPFP CLASS OF 2022-2023,
AND LEARN ABOUT THE FANTASTIC WORK OF
THREE FELLOWS BEGINNING ON PAGE 5.**

Meet our 2022-2023 Fellows

WLPPFP is delighted to welcome five US fellows and six Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa fellows to the outstanding class of 2022-2023.



Sophia Balemian-Spencer is a 2022 graduate of the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law.

There she received both the Hadley and Ruah Fellowships which are reserved for students who completed 400 hours of full-time employment-law related work in a government agency and 400 hours of public interest work, respectively. Sophia is the Small, Webber Spencer Litigation fellow at the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, furthering her passion for civil rights advocacy. She has most recently been a Law Clerk Fellow for the National LGBTQ Task Force, where she was a legal researcher and writer on LGBTQ equity issues. She has also been a research assistant, a Student Attorney at the UDC Law Legislation/Civil Rights Clinic, and a Judicial Law Clerk at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Sophia received her B.A. in American Studies, with minors in Criminal Justice and World History from George Washington University in 2018.



HIPS and the O'Neill Institute welcome **Mackenzie Darling** as the Maeve McKean Fellow. She received her J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law

in 2022, with concentrations in Health Law & Policy and Poverty Law & Economic Justice. There, she was Associate Editor of the Northeastern University Law Review, and a Fellow for the Program on Human Rights and

the Global Economy. She has worked in several legal organizations that focus on health justice and women's health issues, including most recently the Women's Law Project, Western Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she assisted in the representation of minors seeking abortion care during judicial bypass hearings. She has also worked at the Health in Justice Action Lab, the Center for Health Policy and Law, National Advocates for Pregnant Women, Legal Skills in Social Context, and Reproductive Equity Now. She received both her B.S., summa cum laude, in Public Health and her B.A., summa cum laude, in Honors Philosophy from University at Albany in 2019. Her honors thesis was *Morality of Sex Education: The Need for Autonomy-Promoting Sex Education*.



The National Women's Law Center welcomes **Veronica Faison** to the Reproductive Rights and Health group. Veronica graduated from American University Washington

College of Law in 2021, where she was the Vice President of Campus Education for If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice and Public Relations Director of the Black Law Students Association. As a Federal Policy Associate for the Center for Reproductive Rights, she worked on the Women's Health Protection Act and the Omnibus. She also conducted research on the racial disparity of student debt as a Public Policy intern at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. In 2020-2021, Veronica was a student attorney at WCL's

Gender Justice Clinic where she worked on family law and immigration cases. Most recently, she was a Westwood Fellow for Neighborhood Legal Services Program's Family Law Unit, assisting low-income, majority Black Washington, D.C. area residents with domestic violence, child custody and divorce issues. Veronica received her B.A. in Political Science and Communication and Media Studies from Stetson University in 2018 with a thesis entitled, *Standing Up by Sitting Down: The Delegitimization of Colin Kaepernick*.



Ramatoulie (Ramou) Isatou Jallow joins the LAW program from Botswana. Ramou is an attorney with 5 years' experience in civil and public interest litigation,

with a special focus on human rights. She fuses her litigation experience with human rights research touching specifically on women's rights, the right to health, as well as the broader sphere of conflict prevention, peace and security in Africa. She has held consultancies in each of these areas. She served as a Kroc IPJ Woman Peacemaker Fellow with the University of San Diego. She also has two publications addressing conflict prevention with regard to the pandemic entitled *Covid-19 and Intrastate Armed Conflicts in Africa* and *Beyond the Outbreak: Creating a Sustainable Peace Culture in Botswana*. Ramou holds a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Botswana obtained in 2016. She currently works remotely at the African Union Pan African Parliament, Office of the Legal Counsel.



Lindsay Johnson is a 2022 graduate of Georgetown University Law Center where she received a Certificate in Refugees and Humanitarian

Emergencies, served as a Public Interest Fellow, and was a member of the Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy. She is joining the Clooney Foundation for Justice. Lindsay's passion for human rights has manifested in her work as a legal researcher at The International Bar Association Human Rights Institute in London, where she developed a disability-focused webinar on accessibility in the legal profession. At the Center for Justice and Accountability, she coordinated justice workshops between Syrian and Burmese women's organizations in her role as the transitional justice intern. During her internship with Human Rights First, Lindsay authored a brief seeking asylum for an HIV-positive client fleeing domestic abuse and racial persecution in her home country. As a Student Attorney for Georgetown Law's International Women's Human Rights Clinic, she co-drafted a human rights report on child marriage in Zambia in partnership with local women's rights organizations. Lindsay received her B.A. in Political Science and History from Yale University in 2016.



Nicole Joseph is a Graduate Clinical Teaching Fellow with the Georgetown University Law Center Domestic Violence Clinic. Nicole's background is in doing

poverty law and domestic violence work as a Domestic Violence Staff Attorney in legal aid. As part of her work, Nicole also tackled the broader arena of family law cases, representing survivors of abuse in divorce, custody, and civil protection order cases. Prior to joining Georgetown's DV Clinic, Nicole taught as an adjunct professor at Northern Illinois

University College of Law. Nicole recently began consulting as an expert for battered women in homicide cases. Nicole speaks Spanish conversationally, and spent three months living in Salamanca, Spain. Nicole is a graduate of the University of Michigan, and University of Illinois College of Law, where she also serves as an alumni mentor. During her time at the UofI, Nicole served as the President of both the Family Law Society and the Women's Law Society. She is licensed to practice in Illinois, Massachusetts, and D.C.



Ophelia Kemigisha is a feminist attorney and online activist who has worked tirelessly to challenge Ugandan patriarchy since obtaining her law degree

from Makerere University in 2015. Driven by a desire to protect the human rights of Ugandan women and LGBTQIA+ people, she served as a program officer at Chapter Four Uganda. She then worked with the Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA) where she worked to develop a network of social movements and lawyers to hold states accountable for human rights violations against LGBTQIA+ persons across the continent. Ophelia is also an online community organizer, writing to shift cultural and political norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. Ophelia's research at LAWA will be informed by her own experience with online activism and Pan-African organizing.



The LAWA Program welcomes **Mastullah Ashah Mwanga** from Uganda. She is a human rights activist, writer, and lawyer who was recognized as a 2017

Global Change Leader by the Coady International Institute of the St. Francis Xavier University, Canada for her outstanding work in human rights for women. Ashah has worked

with individuals and organizations in Uganda, East Africa, and Central Asia. Her work reflects her passion and advocacy for women's rights and feminist values. In her most recent position, she is the Global Director of Family Law Reform for the Alliance for Inclusive Muslims (AIM). She is also a Global Advisor at The Young Feminist Fund (FRIDA). In 2013, Ashah founded the Islamic Women's Initiative for Justice Law and Peace (IWILAP), an organization established to fight for the restoration of women's human rights through legal assistance. Ashah received her LL.B. in 2014 from Makerere University. She also holds a B.A. in Development Studies from Makerere University. She also holds her first Master's Degree in Human Rights from Makerere, and a post-graduate diploma in Legal Practice from the Law Development Centre.



Abigail Nthuba joins the LAWA fellowship from Botswana. She received her LL.B. from Northwest University, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa in 2015. Her

experiences include working as State Counsel in the Attorney General's Chambers in Gaborone, Botswana where she represented the state in civil suits, and as a Chairperson for the Disability Advocacy and Empowerment Organization in Gaborone where she represented the organization to donors and stakeholders. She has also worked as the Assistant Legal Investigator for the Office of the Ombudsman of Botswana to investigate poor administration within the government. There, she also served on several committees on public outreach and education. Abigail published *Reflections on Day 2 of the AfriELN Biennial Conference: Covid-19 and International Economic Law: Africa's Experiences and Responses* in AfronomicsLaw.

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The LAWA Program welcomes **Sharleen Awuor Oduor** from Kenya. Sharleen is a dedicated advocate for the human rights of women, children, and marginalized communities. She received her Bachelor of Law degree from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, in Nairobi, Kenya in 2015. She received a post-graduate diploma in the Advocate Training Program from the Kenya School of Law in Nairobi, Kenya. She was the Program Coordinator at the Girls Leading Our World Institute (iGLOW), which advocates for the empowerment of women and girls in Kenya. She also worked as Program Assistant at the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights, which is an independent organization established to protect and

promote human rights. Sharleen coordinated a human rights investigation in concern of the displacement and eviction of families in Kuresoi North County because of the construction of the Itare Dam. She has participated in the Mandela Washington Fellowship, Leadership in Civic Engagement training at Rutgers University.



Ingrid Ashaba Ogwang joins the LAWA program from Uganda, where she is a dedicated feminist lawyer working to empower women and refugees. In

her most recent position as a National Protection and Rule of Law (PRoL) Manager for Economic Justice in the International Rescue Committee - Kampala, she oversaw

and implemented PRoL programming in a seed initiative, and a livelihood project serving urban refugees, vulnerable nationals and female clients. Prior to that, she was a legal researcher at Strengthening Uganda's Anti-Corruption Response Technical Advisory Facility, where she supported work on administrative sanctions and system strengthening interventions. Ingrid was also a volunteer attorney for the International Justice Mission where she was involved in protecting the land rights of widows and orphans. She graduated from Makerere University with her LL.B. in 2015. She also holds a post-graduate diploma in Legal Practice from the Law Development Centre.



The LAWAs catch a play at Arena Stage.



A few US Fellows gather for some bonding time.

Ramatoulie (Ramou) Isatou Jallow (LAWA 2022-2023)

Youth and the Future of Peace and Security in Africa



On September 15, 2022, the Wilson Center African Program hosted a panel discussion titled “Youth and the Future of Peace and Security in Africa” as part of its broader Annual Conference, Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding (SVNP), held under the 2022 theme “Business Unusual: A Rapidly Changing World Calls for Adapting Peacebuilding in Africa.” Here, I had the pleasure of being invited to speak as a female youth peace-builder and to reflect on the untapped potential that African youth have, across the continent, in designing innovative ways of building peace in their communities.

On the panel, I was joined by Dr. Augustino Mayai, Director of Research at the Sudd Institute, Juba, South Sudan as well as Fr. Hyacinthe Loua, General Director at the Center of Research and Action for Peace, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Both have had formidable experience in the area of peace, with Dr. Mayai looking at peace from the perspective of demography and development from the context of South Sudan and Fr.

Loua looking at peace from the perspective of education, theology, conflict management, sociology and anthropology.

Together, we explored the implications of the expected youth bulge on peace, security, development and access to basic socio-economic rights and services. Young people aged from 25 years old and below set to stand as 65% of the population of Africa by 2050. Though youth have typically been highlighted as the one of the highest demographics to be negatively impacted by conflict on the continent and the most prone to take justice into their own hands through the use of public demonstration and “violent extremism”, our conversation, instead, highlighted this as only one side of the story.

The reality is that youth are also fighting to survive and have their voices heard in the midst of the failures of their respective governments. We therefore spoke about the need for governments to acknowledge the growing demographic of youth in their

countries by integrating their voices into meaningful decision-making platforms and positions in taking countries forward. We also spoke about the importance of harnessing the talents of youth as a key for building peace and sustainable development and the need utilize the intersection between the women's movement and youth in driving both causes forward, on the African continent.

Despite the coming challenges, there are countless opportunities to build an engaged and vibrant population of young people who want to participate in building a peaceful society with meaningful opportunities to develop their talents. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to explore this and other issues as I pursue the specialized LL.M. in National Security Law.

You can hear Ramou's insightful comments here: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/svnp-2022-youth-and-future-peace-and-security-africa>

Ashah Mwanga Mastullah (LAWA 2022-2023)

Addressing Apostasy & Blasphemy Laws in Muslim Societies Workshop

On the 14th September 2022, Muslims for Progressive Values, an International Organisation based in the United States, invited me to speak as a panelist at an event on Capitol Hill. I presented a paper titled "Promoting Religious Rights of Muslim Women in Uganda." I shared key lessons and challenges Muslim women and feminists in Uganda face through apostasy and blasphemy legislation, which violates the fundamental teachings of Islam as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I also highlighted that eradicating apostasy and blasphemy laws in Muslim societies can never be achieved until we understand the historical, religious, and political context of its origins while advancing women's rights.

The continued abuse of marriage and divorce rights of Muslim women and girls and the general lack of redress for those in quest for access to justice is a major hindrance to enjoyment of Muslim women's rights. Muslim women undergo discrimination, and many underage Muslim girls and women are in forced marriages due to patriarchal interpretations of Islam. This worsens the challenges at, during and after marriage.

This situation is made even worse because Muslim women are forced to use informal courts to resolve family law matters. As I explained in my presentation:

When you look at article 129(d) of the Ugandan constitution, it provides for the establishment of Qadhi courts but despite having numerous amendments in this Constitution, no effort has been made to operationalise the formal Qadhi courts. There is lack of government political will to handle this matter, which is a disservice to Muslims. Also the members of Parliament

who profess the Muslim faith have let us down. The Uganda Muslim Council put in place informal Qadhi courts that now purport to work as Qadhi courts, but these are male-dominated and patriarchal in nature. Some of judges violate rights of their family members and they do not look at issues raised by women from a human rights angle. At the end of the day, there is no justice.

Moreover, by failing to establish these courts, the Ugandan government is not meeting its Constitutional obligations and promoting segregation against those professing the Muslim faith, especially Muslim women who would be the direct beneficiaries of justice in Qadhi courts.

I also raised other concerns including an attempt by some Muslim men to use religion as a tool to subjugate women. Some Muslim men erroneously claim that all women should focus on being submissive to their husbands and even consider abandoning their careers. I stressed that the wrong promoters of Islam

use all excuses to try and gag women. What is often underreported or regarded as less important is the targeting of Muslim feminist advocates and human rights defenders by members of their own communities and by the very government meant to protect us. When Muslim feminists come in with advocacy to create awareness, we are faced with continued brutality and stereotypes by Muslim communities. In some cases, accusations of blasphemy are even made against us. In my conclusion, I urged the Muslim community, especially Imams and Sheiks, to preach Muslim women's rights as provided for in the Holy Quran.

It was truly an honor to have the opportunity to advocate on behalf of Muslim women's human rights in Uganda while more than 10,000 kilometers away from home. As I will continue to research and address these issues in my LAWA Thesis, I know that I will only grow as an advocate over the course of this year.

ADDRESSING APOSTASY AND BLASPHEMY LAWS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

SEPTEMBER 14, 2022
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM EST

RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING 2060
CAPITOL HILL, WASHINGTON DC

SESSION I - LAYING THE FOUNDATION

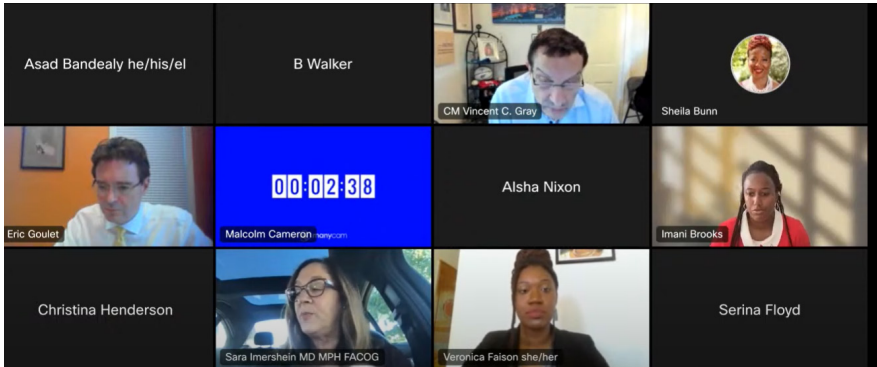
In order to counter the prominence of apostasy and blasphemy laws in Muslim societies, it is important to understand the social, historical and religious contexts they are rooted in.

SESSION II - STRATEGIES TOWARD ERADICATING APOSTASY & BLASPHEMY LAWS

Interactive session on strategic and advocacy efforts in countering narratives of Islamic fundamentalism that not only undergird FoRB, women and rights violations against LGBTIQ+ persons, but also provide the discursive basis for radicalism and violent extremism.

Veronica Faison (US 2022-2023)

Testimony on Protecting Health Professionals Providing Reproductive Health Care Amendment Act



Anti-abortion state legislatures have redoubled their efforts to rob constituents of the right to determine their own reproductive futures. But, despite all the post-Dobbs calamity, it has been heartening to see how reproductive justice organizers have demanded more from progressive policymakers. It is even more heartening to see that many of those policymakers are answering the call.

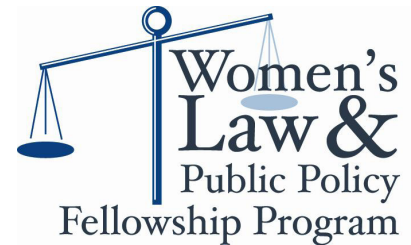
On September 28, 2022, I had the opportunity to support such an effort. Robert White, DC councilmember, proposed a bill, “the Protecting Health Professionals Providing Reproductive Health Care Amendment Act.” I testified to the Committee on Health on behalf of my organization, the National Women’s Law Center, and articulated how passing the bill would help expand access to abortion in DC. Under the bill, if a healthcare provider had their medical license suspended or removed solely for providing an abortion in an anti-abortion jurisdiction, DC’s Medical Board would not recognize that as a legitimate basis for discipline—meaning they could still practice medicine in DC.

Punishing a healthcare professional for fulfilling their patient’s needs is incredibly harmful (not to mention counterintuitive), but anti-abortion state legislators have targeted

medical providers with the goal of making it near impossible to provide good reproductive healthcare to pregnant patients. I believe that healthcare providers who are dedicated providing the full extent of reproductive healthcare to their patients should be welcomed to give DC residents the affirming, dignified treatment they deserve.

Many DC providers who provide healthcare in DC also practice in Maryland, Virginia and other states with precarious positions on abortion. I testified that this bill would make help ensure that good healthcare providers are not estopped from helping DC residents. Many DC residents already face an anti-Black healthcare system that contributes to pregnancy-related health crises. There is also the reality that, as states continue to restrict abortion, pregnant people are forced to travel to access the care they need. As many DC councilmembers envision DC as sanctuary for abortion seekers, its important that policymakers continue to expand access for residents and travelers alike.

Abortion is healthcare and I am very proud to be part of an organization that is rooted in that conviction, and even prouder to be a DC resident myself.



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The LAWA Fellows attend the Vital Voices Global Leadership Awards.



The Fellows gather to celebrate the National Women's Law Center's 50th Anniversary Gala.



The LAWAs enjoyed a visit from Fellowship supporter Sherrell Andrews.



NWLC General Counsel **Neena Chaudhry (US 1997-1998)** and NWLC Vice President for Education & Workplace Justice **Emily Martin (US 1999-2000)** sparkle at the NWLC Gala.