

OUTREACH

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

2026

SPRING | SUMMER



Growth

The Women's Law & Public Policy Fellowship is often described as transformative. Check out the Fellows' reflections on how they've grown personally and professionally this year!



Jill C. Morrison
Executive Director
(US 1998-1999)

A Year to Grow

Each month, the Fellows submit a report reflecting on their Fellowship experiences, including their placements for the US Fellows, and classes and extracurricular activities for the LAWA Fellows. As we approach the Fellowship year's end, it isn't unusual for them to remark on how they will miss what was sometimes just another thing to do on their long to-do lists.

This is because those reports are an opportunity for each Fellow to think about how they've grown from month to month. One of the great joys of my job is hearing about their new skills, strategies for handling challenges, and changes in perspective. So I decided to give you a glimpse of their growth reflections in this newsletter. I hope you enjoy them as much as I do and gain an appreciation for how transformative the Women's Law & Public Policy Fellowship is for each of our amazing Fellows.

Reflections

Sydnee Fielkow, US Fellow

Over the past year as a Clinical Teaching Fellow with Georgetown Law's Domestic Violence Clinic, I have grown more than I could have expected, both professionally and personally. As I've transitioned from direct services to teaching in a law school clinic, I've shifted my focus to fostering students' development as thoughtful, zealous advocates. I have learned to guide students through the strategic decision-making process and encourage them to find their professional voices. Through case rounds, individual meetings, and classroom discussions, I have developed a deeper appreciation for different advocacy styles and engaging in reflective practices in the legal setting.

I have witnessed firsthand how students' creative thinking, persuasive advocacy, and empathetic listening have resulted in favorable client outcomes and impactful client relationships. This Fellowship has deepened my commitment to public service and mentoring young attorneys. Watching students grow into advocates throughout the semester has been incredibly rewarding.



Sydnee, far left, with her clinic students and Senior Fellow, Jeannie Lieder, US 2024-2025, fifth from left.

Maria Ortiz Pineda, US Fellow

This year has been a genuine turning point for me professionally. Coming into a portfolio on federal civil rights enforcement at the National Partnership for Women and Families, I had little background in federal contractor affirmative action and non-discrimination requirements. Over the course of the year, I've built a much stronger grasp of the regulatory landscape around these issue areas, how these frameworks fit together, and what levers exist for oversight and accountability.

I'm still learning, but I can now pick up a new legal or regulatory framework and get up to speed far more quickly than before, which has been especially valuable as issues shift rapidly under this administration. I've also become a meaningfully stronger writer this year. I've gotten sharper with brevity, formatting, and structure, and I can see it in the quality of my work.

Much of this growth comes down to my colleagues. I've learned enormously from watching how they approach their work, getting their feedback on drafts, and being in rooms where people dig into hard problems collaboratively. They've made me a better analyst and a better advocate. I'm genuinely grateful to be part of a team that invests in each other the way this one does.



A National Partnership for Women and Families blog post authored by Maria

Briana Torres, US Fellow

A year ago, right after taking the bar exam, I packed up my life in Texas and moved to Washington, D.C. to begin the WLPFP Fellowship. Even before law school, I had heard about the Fellowship, so arriving in D.C. felt both exciting and surreal.

I came into the Fellowship with a strong commitment to reproductive justice, but over the past year, my understanding of health justice expanded in ways I never anticipated. Through my placements at the National Health Law Program and the O'Neill Institute, I worked on issues ranging from Medicaid policy to maternal health to federal regulatory processes. The work challenged me to think more broadly about how law and policy shape people's access to care.

One of the most meaningful parts of this year has been finding my place within the health law and reproductive justice community. Attending congressional briefings, hearings, and meetings with advocates and policymakers allowed me to build relationships with people whose work I have long admired. For the first time, I felt less like a student looking into the field and more like someone beginning to contribute to it.

The Fellowship also allowed me to reconnect with my lifelong love of writing. This year, I published multiple op-eds and used writing as a tool for advocacy, translating complex policy issues for broader audiences. Merging that passion with my career in health justice has been one of the greatest gifts of this experience.



Briana took on tough issues in newspapers from coast to coast

Reflections

Joy Awich, LAWA Fellow

For a decade, a dream I carried through every stage of my career in women's rights advocacy across Africa – to become a LAWA Fellow – only grew stronger with time. Mentors, colleagues, and leaders who learned of my aspirations consistently told me that LAWA was the perfect fit for me. Looking back now, they were right.

Attending Georgetown Law was a lifelong dream, and joining LAWA came at exactly the right time in my personal and professional journey. As a Pan-African feminist lawyer and advocate, I wanted to deepen my scholarship, sharpen my legal research and writing skills, and strengthen my ability to influence law and policy on the global stage. LAWA and the LL.M. program provided all of that and more.

This year challenged and transformed me in ways I could not have anticipated. I learned to lead with greater conviction, engage across difference, and bring a sharper, more globally informed lens to matters I am deeply passionate about. The rigor of the LL.M. program taught me that effective global leadership demands both intellectual depth and the humility to keep learning.

Beyond the classroom, LAWA provided something I did not know I needed – a sisterhood that left no woman behind. One whose brilliance, warmth, and solidarity made this year truly unforgettable.

I leave Georgetown with profound gratitude for the faculty and staff who invested in my growth and a renewed commitment to confidently raise my voice for African women and girls – in service of a more just, equitable, and prosperous Africa.



Joy (holding flowers) and her village at the LawCappella Fall concert

Mamawa Kaikai, LAWA Fellow

When I arrived at Georgetown as a LAWA Fellow, I believed I knew how to write – I had litigated cases, drafted briefs, and advocated across high-level policy spaces. But this experience dismantled and rebuilt my understanding of what writing is for.

The most profound shift has been learning to hold tension. Scholarly writing, I discovered, does not always resolve the conflicts it raises, nor does it always answer the questions it poses. That irresolution is not a failure but an invitation to keep writing. It is precisely this tension that grounded my Global Health Law paper. It examined the human rights implications of non-consensual HIV testing of mothers in the context of maternal and newborn health, navigating the conflict between a newborn's right to health and a mother's right to privacy under international law. I received the CALI Excellence for the Future Award for this paper.

Equally transformative was learning how to read with purpose. I developed a framework for engaging scholarship – locating its central argument, identifying the theoretical architecture, and asking what work those theories are doing. This discipline has reorganized how I think. I now build my own arguments the way I have learnt to dismantle others with structural intentionality. This framework was further solidified by the peer review model we engaged with throughout the LAWA program: listening to my colleagues present their work and offering a critique that is rigorous and generative.

I end this program still sitting with tension. But I now know that is exactly where the writing begins.



Mamawa at the O'Neill Institute's graduation celebration

Reflections

Nardos Girma Wolde, LAWA Fellow

A year ago, I stepped into LAWA not fully knowing what to expect. I leave certain of one thing: this has been the most transformative experience of my life. Over eleven months, I was stretched, challenged, and reshaped through study, resilience, and the courage to confront questions I had never been taught to ask.

My writing sharpened until I could feel the difference on the page. My voice grew steady enough to stand in any room and claim space. I carried fears for years, and here I learned to set them down. I mastered Bluebooking, deepened my grasp of women's rights issues across Africa and beyond, and practiced advocacy until it became second nature.

The LAWA program was never just about coursework. Georgetown was never just another university. Every assignment, every encounter, every difficult moment carried meaning, pointing toward something larger. I leave with knowledge, clarity, and skills already opening doors. More than a credential, I leave with a deeper honesty about myself. This was not simply a year of study; it was a year of becoming. And for every challenge, every lesson, and every person who shaped this journey, I am grateful.



Nardos was a Rotary International mentor of the month

Frachia Kagu, LAWA Fellow

This year has been one of the most transformative of my life, and also one of the most difficult. It has been marked by terrible personal loss, by pushing through pain, and by choosing every single day to show up anyway. That I was able to do so is in no small part because of Georgetown Law, where every system felt designed with a single purpose: to support students to succeed.

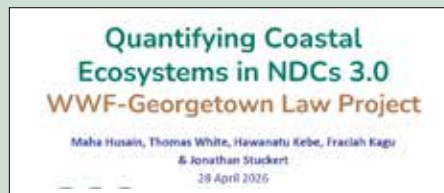
I came with the goal of expanding my learning into emerging areas of human rights. I am leaving with so much more than a broadened curriculum. I leave with perspectives gathered from classmates across the globe, friendships forged through shared struggle, and a richer understanding of how law lives differently in different contexts.

My greatest growth came through the LAWA seminar. I had always looked at academic writing as a monumental hurdle that every student had to overcome. LAWA broke that down into something manageable, understandable, and truly enjoyable. More than that, it showed me that everyone has something worth saying, and that documenting our experiences and our work is itself an act of advocacy.

I was also inducted into the most brilliant sisterhood of human rights lawyers. We carried each other through the year, through the ups and the downs, and knowing someone would catch you if you fell was the greatest gift of all.

Growth, I have come to understand, is rarely something you can see clearly while you are inside it.

I do not yet have the full measure of what this year has given me, but I am deeply grateful, and I cannot wait to find out.



Frachia's Environmental Law Practicum Project

Reflections

Payton Small Gannon, US Fellow

During this past year, I have grown in many ways, both personally and professionally, through this Fellowship. Specifically, I have honed my legal research and writing abilities. At the National Women's Law Center, I have had the opportunity to work on many aspects of litigation, including drafting amicus briefs and complaints, as well as developing litigation strategy. I have also grown as a colleague, learning from those around me, how I can be the most helpful and how I can best communicate my work.

All of the new things that I had to learn as a first-year litigator could have been intimidating, but my colleagues at NWLC and the Women's Law & Public Policy Fellowship Program have ensured I feel supported. The WLPFP seminars have also grown my knowledge of women's rights issues and the myriad of ways the law has a gendered impact. Each seminar has been a fascinating opportunity to learn about new areas of law and grow my knowledge of the gender justice movement. Additionally, the LAWAs' perspectives and experiences with different legal systems regularly challenge me to think differently about issues I may have thought I was familiar with. The Fellowship has made me a better, more well-rounded lawyer and advocate for women's rights.



One of Payton's many contributions to NWLC's litigation docket during her Fellowship year

Elizabeth Atori, LAWA Fellow

Legal education and women's rights advocacy in Uganda had taught me to work within systems. The LAWA Fellowship weekly seminars asked something harder: to stand outside those systems entirely and ask whether their foundations deserved to hold. I am a more rigorous thinker for it, held through the difficulty by four fellow LAWA scholars who were navigating the same becoming, and by Professor Morrison, who never let any of us forget why we came.

My thesis named what I had been circling all year: double dispossession. Women turned away from digital services while their most intimate data is quietly extracted for ends they will never benefit from: excluded from the front door, and extracted through the back.

A week after graduation, an email arrived from Harvard. The Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights was offering me the Technology and Human Rights Fellowship. This victory, like everything else this year, was never mine alone. None of this happens without every individual who funds this fellowship and believes that advocates like us belong in these conversations. A full scholarship is not a small thing. For many of us, it is the difference between a dream and a reality. The woman in Uganda who walked three hours to an enrollment center and was turned away is still waiting. I am still building. I have never been more ready.



Elizabeth (left) with Dr. Sejin Paik, at the Massive Data Institute's Student Showcase

LAWA Thesis Presentations

The LAWA Fellows had the opportunity to present at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, the Open Society Foundations, and to our largest Zoom audience ever!

Elizabeth Atori—*Ghosted by Biometrics: Accounting for Women's Lived Realities Within Uganda's Identification System*

Joy Awich—*Trust to Trauma: Criminalizing Sexual Grooming in Kenya to Protect Women and Girls from Sexual Violence*

Fracia Kagu—*Hidden Work, Visible Harm: Addressing the Vulnerability of Kenyan Domestic Workers in the Middle East*

Juliet Mamawa Kaikai—*In Her Defense: An Anti-Carceral Response to Women who Kill their Abusers in Sierra Leone*

Nardos Girma Wolde—*Across Feeds and Frontlines: Protecting Women Advocates and Advancing Safe and Equal Digital Participation in Ethiopia Through Policy Reform*



The LAWA Fellows were hosted by Mooya Nyundi, LAWA 2012-2013 at the Open Society Foundations' DC office.



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