LEARNING FROM OUR STUDENTS

THOMAS F. GERAGHTY

The other day, in my class on access to justice, we were discussing the interplay between formal and community-based justice systems in developing countries. Students in the class include Americans as well as students from abroad, some of whom are enrolled in the Law School’s LL.M program on International Human Rights. Luckily for the class and for me, one of our LL.M. students is a Nigerian lawyer with experience as a practitioner—as both a defense lawyer and a prosecutor. His observations about how conflicts between customary practices and laws enforced by courts are resolved in Nigeria were, to say the least, enlightening, and he brought perspectives based in real-life experience into our classroom. The class’s attention turned to him. He taught the class as a student and as an advocate for human rights who has experienced the complexities of human rights advocacy on the ground. His contribution to our Law School’s enterprise of teaching and learning could not have been more evident. I can only imagine how much he contributes to other classes and to his fellow law students in their informal interactions with each other.

The value that international students bring to a law school is well recognized. Nothing particularly new here. However, the value that experienced international human rights advocates who enroll in our graduate programs add is unique, distinct, and probably under-valued. Not only do these student advocates contribute to our understanding of the challenges involved in protecting and advancing human rights, they almost without exception continue their work in public service after graduation. In so doing, they continue to benefit their communities while, in many cases, putting aside lucrative potential careers in favor of practicing under the most difficult and sometimes hazardous conditions.

Our former graduate students also help us to maintain links with individuals and organizations that provide our current students with opportunities to participate in meaningful projects as part of their clinical education. The value of those links cannot be over-estimated, because they are based on long-term relationships that enable engagement focused on turning out an excellent product and ensuring a solid educational experience. Our roster of LL.M. graduates is impressive not only for the number and accomplishments of our degree holders, but also for ensuring that our law school remains engaged in places where, as in the U.S., the human rights of vulnerable populations are threatened.

Bringing eight to ten distinguished human rights advocates to Northwestern each year from countries such as Nigeria, Nepal, Kenya, and Bangladesh to obtain their LL.M. degrees is an ambitious and an expensive undertaking. We compete with other fine LL.M. programs in the U.S. and with other fine and less expensive such programs abroad. But the value of our LL.M. program in human rights to our graduate students, to our undergraduate law students, and to our community at Northwestern cannot be over-estimated. It is the value of maintaining our connections with the real world of human rights study and advocacy.
Northwestern Law to Honor Women Judges in Afghanistan

JUDGE ANISA RASOOLI WILL ACCEPT GLOBAL JURIST OF THE YEAR AWARD ON BEHALF OF ALL AFGHAN WOMEN JUDGES

Northwestern Pritzker School of Law’s Center for International Human Rights (CIHR) will award its seventh Global Jurist of the Year Award to all women judges in Afghanistan, in recognition of the courage they all have shown under the difficult circumstances of the last months. A group of Afghan women judges who have left Afghanistan will accompany Judge Anisa Rasooli when she accepts the award.

The judges will be honored during an awards dinner on Wednesday, March 2, 2022. They also will visit with scholars and judges and meet with Northwestern Law students.

The Global Jurist of the Year Award is designed to honor a sitting judge, whether in an international or national court, who has demonstrated in his or her career courage in the face of adversity to uphold and defend fundamental human rights or the principles of international criminal justice. Jurists from all nations and tribunals are eligible for consideration.

The International Refugee Assistance Project, Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law Chapter; Northwestern’s Buffett Institute for Global Affairs; the International Association of Women Judges; and the International Law Foundation are co-sponsors of the event.

“The women judges of Afghanistan have, by their example and through their work, demonstrated unimaginable courage and commitment,” said Northwestern Law professors Tom Geraghty and Juliet Sorensen in a joint statement. “They continue to stand for right even as they endure the heartbreaking hardships that recent events have forced upon them. We at Northwestern’s Center for International Human Rights look forward to welcoming these distinguished women to Chicago and to honoring them with the CIHR’s Global Jurist of the Year Award.”

Known as “the RBG of Afghanistan,” Judge Rasooli is the only woman to be nominated twice to the Afghan Supreme Council, nominated by both former president of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai and by former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. The first vote failed in parliament by a small margin. The second vote never got scheduled because of the fall of the government. Judge Rasooli has served in all major courts both in first instance and appellate courts. She has served on both the anti-corruption courts and the court for serious crimes of violence against women. One of her many projects was heading a three-year study on prison reform. She is a past president of the Afghan Women Judges Association.

Judge Rasooli and her family were able to leave Afghanistan and are now in Poland. She received a Humanitarian Special Benefits Parole visa for her and her family and is expected to relocate to the United States in the near future.

Past recipients of the CIHR’s Global Jurist Award include Justice Mumbi Ngugi, Judge of the High Court of Kenya; Judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi, president of the International Criminal Court and a national of Argentina; Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella of the Supreme Court of Canada; the Honorable Gloria Patricia Porras Escobar, president of the Guatemalan Constitutional Court; and Justice Shireen Avis Fisher, president of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. In 2013, Acting Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke of South Africa’s Constitutional Court was the first recipient of the Global Jurist Award.
Bridget Arimond, Clinical Professor of Law, has continued her human rights education and training work in the Republic of Georgia, under the auspices of the East West Management Institute’s USAID-funded project on Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia (PROLoG). During Spring 2020, Arimond designed and taught an eight-session distance learning course for Georgian law students, “Human Rights Advocacy within the United Nations System: A Practical Course for Human Rights Advocates.” Twelve law students from various Georgian law schools were selected to participate based on their academic records and prior volunteer work with human rights NGOs. Following the class sessions, each student had the opportunity to practice what they had learned by drafting a mock report for one of the UN human rights mechanisms. She then traveled to western Georgia to begin a new partnership with law school administrators and faculty at Zugdidi University, supporting their development of a new law clinic. Arimond concluded her trip with a lengthy meeting with USAID officials at the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, to discuss her past and current work with law schools in Georgia.

COMBATTING CORPORATE IMPUNITY FOR ATROCITY CRIMES IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Students in Professor Arimond’s International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic are playing a key role in the pilot project of a new Geneva-based NGO, the International Platform for Corporate Liability (IPCL). IPCL’s mission is to work against corporate impunity for crimes under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, namely: crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of aggression. As its pilot project, IPCL is examining the possible contribution of corporate actors to the commission of international crimes within the gold and diamond trade in and from the Central African Republic (CAR).

Working with IPCL’s international team, IHR Advocacy Clinic students have conducted extensive research into the gold and diamond trade originating in CAR as well as the proximity to mining sites of atrocity crimes, in order to identify corporate actors whose activities may make them complicit in international crimes. Where possible, they have communicated with contacts on the ground in and near CAR, and they have pored through countless UN reports, US sanctions documents, reports by human rights NGOs, news media articles, online databases, and countless other sources. Students have also studied international criminal law decisions, to understand the elements that must be proved to establish criminal liability. Although work on this project is continuing, students engaged in this project have already prepared extensive reports on companies whose activities suggest possible complicity in international crimes.

Through this project, IHR Advocacy students have enhanced their ability to conduct research and analysis of complex data relevant to human rights violations, and they have had the opportunity to meet regularly with and learn from international partners with expertise in human rights and humanitarian law. The reports they have contributed to this project have
Students who have contributed to this project include Snjeza Barrack, James Ford, Unusa Karimu, Michelle Kim, Chuka Arinze Onyia, Rabia Sener, Henna Shah, Reynolds Taylor, and Kwashay Wilkerson.

Environmental contamination from Ethiopia’s Lega Dembi gold mine has caused catastrophic harm to the health and well-being of the indigenous Guji people living in proximity to the mine. Serious deficiencies in mine management combined with lack of regulatory oversight have resulted in dangerous levels of mercury, arsenic and cyanide in the soil and water supply. This contamination has caused frequent and severe health problems, high rates of miscarriage, stillbirth, infant mortality and congenital disabilities, the withering of crops and the death of livestock. Despite long-standing community opposition, the mine remains in operation, and advocacy against the mine can bring death threats and other forms of retaliation.

In 2018, Ethiopian NGOs representing the Guji people asked Professor Arimond and her IHR Advocacy Clinic students to advocate against the mine at the international level. Since that time, Arimond and her students have twice visited Ethiopia to meet with NGO colleagues and interview victims and other stakeholders, and they have submitted reports to various UN human rights mechanisms, leading to statements of concern and accompanying recommendations to the Ethiopian Government.

This advocacy has continued during 2021. For example, in March 2021, in collaboration with our Guji NGO partners, clinic students Chuka Arinze Onyia, Reynolds Taylor and Shay Wilkerson worked with Arimond to prepare a submission to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), in response to EMRIP’s Call for Input for its study of the rights of indigenous children. Using Lega Dembi as an illustrative example, we urged EMRIP to include in its study a discussion of the severe impact extractive industries can have on the rights of the indigenous child. We were very pleased that EMRIP’s study, presented to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2021, not only included such a discussion but devoted a full paragraph to the Lega Dembi situation.

In June 2021, Onyia and Arimond prepared a submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in connection with CEDAW’s development of a new General Recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls, including their right to effective participation, consultation and consent in public life. Our submission urged CEDAW to focus on the particular importance of this right in the context of extractives, once again using Lega Dembi as an illustrative example. Although CEDAW has not yet completed work on the new General Recommendation, we remain hopeful that our views will be taken into consideration.

Carolyn Frazier, Clinical Professor of Law, continues to focus much of her clinical work on advocating before local, regional and international bodies for children and young adults deprived of liberty in detention centers and prisons. In Malawi, where lawyers for detained children are close to nonexistent, Frazier is partnering with the Centre for Human Rights Education, Assistance and Advice (CHREAA) and the Child Rights Advocacy and Paralegal Aid Centre (CRA-PAC) to increase these children's access to justice through the development of the Malawi Children’s Post-Disposition Advocacy Project. In Phase One of this Project, Frazier’s clinic has worked with local partners to identify cases where youth are serving extreme sentences, or there are irregularities in their cases or sentences that can be challenged. Clinic students then conduct legal research on the issues in the cases, interview their clients (remotely during the pandemic), and draft pleadings seeking their release.

Since beginning the Project, clinic students and their local partners have filed numerous pleadings and have already secured the release of several youth on bail pending appeal. Additionally, they have successfully had other youth transferred from
adult prisons into youth reformatory centers. As they continue to bring more cases in domestic courts, students are identifying patterns in how these children’s rights are being regularly violated by the State, with a plan to raise these violations before regional and international human rights mechanisms. Students are also building out a digital resource center that will serve as a repository for their research, and which will be freely accessible to local lawyers who take on children’s cases pro bono pursuant to Malawi’s new 25-hour annual legal pro bono requirement. A final activity planned for phase two of the project is to design and deliver trainings for lay magistrates and pro bono attorneys on Malawi’s recently enacted child justice act.

In Latin America, Frazier has partnered with Justicia Juvenil Internacional (Juvenile Justice Advocates International, or JJAI) and several other Latin American child advocacy organizations to assess Latin American child justice systems’ response to COVID-19 through a series of stakeholder surveys. A particular focus of their work has been to understand the impact of the pandemic on the rights of children deprived of liberty in these systems. On November 16, 2021, Frazier and her colleagues discussed the findings from their work, and best practices for protecting detained children’s rights during a public health or other emergency, on a panel entitled “Respuestas de Sistemas de Justicia en LATAM ante COVID” (Responses of Justice Systems in Latin America to COVID) at the 2021 World Congress on Justice with Children. Frazier’s students have also assisted JJAI in preparing reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Committee Against Torture regarding various countries’ pre-trial use of detention.

Finally, in Myanmar, Frazier’s students conducted key informant interviews with local juvenile defense attorneys as part of their ongoing effort in partnership with the International Legal Foundation to examine the conditions of confinement facing children in conflict with the law in that country.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR WIDOWS

When women in many parts of the world lose a spouse, they face discrimination, culturally sanctioned sexual abuse, “property grabbing” (the theft of marital assets by their spouse’s family), and even suspicion of having been somehow responsible for the death of the husband. While some domestic and international laws exist to protect widows from these practices, knowledge of these laws on the ground is uneven and implementation is difficult due to women’s lack of access to advocates and both formal and informal justice systems. As a result, widows often end up shunned and living in extreme poverty. As widows generally maintain responsibility for their children after their spouse’s death, these children—an estimated five million within Malawi alone—face the same poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to their rights as their mothers.

In partnership with the Malawi Widows Association (MAWIA), Professor Carolyn Frazier’s clinic has established a multi-year program of work to support the legal empowerment prong of MAWIA’s organizational mission. This fall, MAWIA referred its first widow to the clinic for advocacy before the Malawi Human Rights Commission as well as the United Nations Special Procedures, arguing that the State is violating several of the client’s human rights by prosecuting her for murdering her husband based on rumor, and in the absence of any reliable evidence to support the charges. Clinic students have conducted numerous client interviews as well as in-depth research into the cultural stigma against widows that allows anti-widow rumors to gain credence with police and prosecutors and lead to wrongful prosecutions and convictions. For their next project, students will be working with MAWIA and other NGOs to develop a paralegal training program, to train lay advocates who can educate women about their legal rights upon becoming widowed.

Part of the aim of this project is to bring greater international attention and focus to the treatment of widows, an issue which is chronically neglected. Next spring, pursuant to CIHR’s consultative status with ECOSOC, Frazier’s students hope to present key aspects of that first widow’s case at the Sixty-Sixth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. In April 2021, Frazier was invited by Cornell Law School to moderate a panel on widow’s rights as part of a public interest series on “Transformational Lawyering.”
The CIHR’s work in Ethiopia continued in 2021. In March, nine faculty and administrators of the Bluhm Legal Clinic held a virtual two-day training for 35 new Ethiopian clinical teachers, who were assembled for the training in Addis Ababa. The technical logistics that enabled the Bluhm Legal Clinic to conduct the training from Chicago were successfully managed by the Law School’s information technology department. The program covered the teaching of skills, including interviewing, counseling, negotiation, and legal ethics as well as office and budget management. This program built upon the previous trainings for Ethiopian clinical teachers over the last 15 years. It is hoped that these trainings will continue combining the on-site presence of Northwestern faculty and the ability to include trainers utilizing zoom.

The Bluhm Legal Clinic hosted Dr. Mizanie Abate, Associate Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Research, Addis Ababa University Law School as a visiting Fulbright Scholar. While in residence at the Law School, Dr. Mizanie completed an article on clinical education and legal aid in Ethiopia. He also co-taught a new course, “Access to Justice in the U.S. and in the Developing World,” with Tom Geraghty, Class of 1967 James B. Haddad Professor of Law, and participated in courses taught by CIHR faculty. While at Northwestern, Dr. Mizanie worked with Geraghty and with the Governance & Justice Group on a rapid justice assessment of Ethiopia’s criminal justice system funded by UNDP. He was also part of a team, which included Geraghty, that conducted a review of Ethiopia’s national law curriculum, including clinical education and legal aid. The latter project was funded by USAID.

In collaboration with the Governance & Justice Group, an NGO based in Portugal and led by Adam Stapleton and Kathryn English, British barristers who visited Northwestern in 2008-2009 after living and working in Malawi with the Paralegal Advisory Service for 13 years, Professor Tom Geraghty obtained funding from UNDP to conduct a rapid justice assessment of Ethiopia’s criminal justice system. The work was initiated and completed in 2021 under the leadership of Ethiopian colleagues who gathered statistics and conducted interviews throughout Ethiopia. This project was ongoing during the time of the conflict that originated in Ethiopia’s Tigray region.

Ethiopia currently has 34 law schools located in all of its regions. Most of these law schools were established during the last 10 years, and each are required to follow a national law curriculum. As part of a USAID project focused on strengthening Ethiopia’s justice institutions (The Feteh Project), funding was provided to a team of Addis Ababa University faculty members to conduct a review of Ethiopia’s national law curriculum with particular focus on clinical legal education and legal aid. This project was initiated and completed in 2021. A significant recommendation made by the AAU team is that law schools in Ethiopia be given a degree of autonomy in formulating their own curricula and that increased resources be devoted to clinical legal education and legal aid. AAU faculty will publish a book on recent developments in Ethiopian legal education based upon information gathered as part of this project.

This year, ATH was asked to partner with Elman Peace, a Somali NGO dedicated to promoting peace and empowering the marginalized, on initiatives at the intersection of climate change, human rights, and development. In light of the intensive impacts of climate change and the history of civil conflict in the region,
the focus of our collaboration is an assessment of opportunities for community-based initiatives in Somalia at the intersection of climate change, peace and security.

Seven teams of multidisciplinary Law, Kellogg and Feinberg students developed recommendations for Elman Peace including a climate change adaptation checklist, an analysis of climate-related security risks in Somalia, a proposal for a youth-led approach to climate action, the role of public-private partnerships, and avenues for advocacy in light of Somalia’s obligations pursuant to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Over the summer, an Access to Health student wrote an explainer for community-based NGOs illustrating the link between climate change and conflict in the Lake Chad Basin region and a proposal on various project management tools. We have also partnered with students from the University of Illinois-Chicago Biomedical Visualization program to create visuals that illustrate the link between climate change and security and how it affects different parts of the community, namely women and girls, youth, farmer and herders.

On the Institute for Global Health’s Global Health Education Day, Schuette Clinical Fellow Alexandra Tarzikhan presented on the impacts of climate change on health through the increased prevalence of infectious and non-infectious diseases and the impacts on food security, general safety, and access to preventative and diagnostic healthcare. Tarzikhan was awarded an Honorable Mention for the virtual poster presentation, which can be found here.

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION ON CORRUPTION

In June, Juliet Sorensen, Clinical Professor of Law; Schuette Clinical Fellow Alexandra Tarzikhan; and their student organized a side event at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Corruption titled “Corruption in the Era of Covid-19: An Impediment to Global Health, Human Rights, and Development.” Co-sponsored by the U.S. delegation to the UNGASS, the side event was a timely opportunity to identify and discuss opportunities for the international community to prevent corruption, waste, fraud and abuse in the Covid-19 vaccine supply and distribution chain. A recording of the session can be found here.

SUPREME COURT AMICUS BRIEF—DOBBS V. JACKSON

Professor Juliet Sorensen and Schuette Clinical Fellow Alexandra Tarzikhan worked with Professor Xiao Wang, Clinical Assistant Professor of Law and the new Director of the Appellate Advocacy Center, on an amicus in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health. Dobbs concerns the constitutionality of Mississippi House Bill 1510, which bans abortions after 15 weeks’ gestational age, with very limited exceptions for medical emergencies or severe fatal abnormalities. CIHR and the Appellate Advocacy Center co-counseled the brief, which was filed on behalf of the Global Justice Center, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch.

INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AMICUS BRIEF—MANUELA AND FAMILY V. EL SALVADOR

With the Clooney Foundation for Justice as co-counsel, Professor Juliet Sorensen, Schuette Clinical Fellow Alexandra Tarzikhan, and their student filed an amicus brief before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of Manuela and Family v. El Salvador. The brief advised the Court as to the myriad human rights and health consequences of El Salvador’s total ban on abortion, including the wrongful conviction of “Manuela” for aggravated homicide when she had in fact experienced an obstetric emergency. The court issued a ruling; although it did not go so far as to dismantle El Salvador’s criminalization of abortion, the court made significant findings about the rights to health and fair trial, both of which were violated in this sad case, and ordered El Salvador to undertake meaningful reparations.

NEW SCHUETTE GLOBAL FELLOW IN HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS—REYNOLDS TAYLOR

Reynolds Taylor, a recent JD/MBA graduate from Northwestern Pritzker School of Law and Northwestern Kellogg School of Management, joined the Corporate Accountability Lab in September after receiving the Schuette Global Fellowship in Health and Human Rights. During law school, Taylor focused on ending corporate impunity for human rights abuses,
crimes against humanity, and war crimes. She worked with Basmeh and Zeitooneh in Lebanon’s Shatila Camp and traveled to Beirut with Schuette Clinical Fellow Alexandra Tarzikhan to help implement an income-generating program for displaced Syrian women suffering under restrictive labor laws. Prior to law school, Taylor managed a portfolio of political action and social justice projects across the health care, reproductive justice, climate, and tax policy sectors.

Schuette Clinical Fellow Alexandra Tarzikhan will be coaching a team of students during the 2022 International Migration and Refugee Law Moot Court Competition. The competition, which will be hosted by Ghent University, consisted of a written round in October and November 2021 and a two-day oral round in Ghent, Belgium. Each team pleads a fictitious case between a State and a migrant before a judicial body.

Schuette Clinical Fellow Alexandra Tarzikhan attended the first week of COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference, as part of the Northwestern University Delegation organized by the Buffett Institute for Global Affairs. Tarzikhan’s interests around climate change lie at the intersection of peace, security and climate change in Somalia, the nexus between climate change and migration, and the environmental impacts of Ghana’s cocoa sector. Relevant sessions included Getting to Net Zero Healthcare for All, Negotiating the Paris Agreement: Insider Stories, Tracking Credible Climate Action, Climate Storytellers, COP 26 Presidency’s Open Dialogue, and Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon and Climate Change: New Solutions for Energy from the Indigenous Territories. Participating in the COP provided our Schuette Fellow with the opportunity to engage in a critically important issue in a unique UN forum. Alex was interviewed by WBEZ and spoke on a panel at the Institute for Sustainability and Energy at Northwestern about her experience.

The highlight of my LLM experience was traveling to Geneva, Switzerland to speak before the Human Rights Committee on behalf of a number of groups advocating for LGBTQI+
persons in Liberia. I was humbled to be representing the interests of so many people on the other side of the world, and privileged to present the research our partners on the ground provided. I think of that experience (and many others at Northwestern) often, and it helps me get through tough days at work. I try to do as much pro bono work as I can. Since graduating from Northwestern, I have been a lawyer supervisor with the Pro Bono Students of Canada chapter at the University of Windsor Faculty of Law. The project I have been working on for the past few years has been at the law school’s Trans ID Clinic - a partnership between the law school and Trans Wellness Ontario, which aims to help transgender clients change their names and gender on government-issued identity documents.

Stephanie Kamel LLM ’19, Attorney & Interim Director, Illinois Innocence Project

I am privileged to work at the Illinois Innocence Project (IIP) advocating on behalf of innocent people wrongfully incarcerated in Illinois prisons. As the Interim Director, I co-lead the Project with our Legal Director. Now celebrating our 20th Anniversary, IIP has seen the release or exoneration of 20 clients, eight of which occurred in the past 18 months. While based at the University of Illinois Springfield, the Project has a significant presence on all three U of I campuses via undergraduate internships, legal externships and wrongful conviction courses. We advocate through post-conviction litigation; educate students, the public and police cadets at the Police Training Institute in Champaign; and work on criminal justice reform including the recently passed “Juvenile Deception” bill the passage of which IIP facilitated in conjunction with Northwestern’s Center for Wrongful Convictions and New York’s Innocence Project.

My experience in the IHR LLM program and working in the IHR legal clinic helped prepare me for the “heaviness” of practicing in the area of human rights law. The Clinic project work along with the various readings and discussions allowed us to experience and address the lows and highs that come with along with a human rights’ legal practice. The highlight of my IHR LLM experience was meeting and befriending my classmates, amazing attorneys from around the world. Learning about their cultures in and outside of class, sharing meals, and discussing issues and current world events was one of the most wonderful and gratifying experiences throughout my year spent in the Northwestern IHR LLM program.

Ilan Gafni LLM ’14, PHD Candidate, London School of Economics

After graduating from Northwestern, I started working as a Senior Law Clerk to the Israeli Supreme Court Deputy President, Justice Elyakim Rubinstein. For a little over four years, I engaged with different legal questions in varied areas of the law, including complex human rights matters. After Justice Rubinstein’s retirement, I decided it was time to go back to academia. In 2017, I was privileged to be accepted to the PhD program in Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where I received a full scholarship for my studies. As part of my thesis, I research compensation claims under English law, made by private individuals against public authorities for violating their rights. I also teach Legal Research and the Law of Obligations, for which I was awarded the LSE Teaching Award last year.

My current work and research are influenced by the knowledge and experiences I gained during my LLM studies. While the LLM focused on the International Law perspective and the role of different institutions in protecting human rights, my current research focuses on monetary remedies that allow people mistreated by the state to receive both compensation and recognition of the harm done to them. Looking back at my time in Northwestern’s LLM program, my most meaningful experience was taking part in the International Human Rights Clinic, led at the time by Professor Sandra Babcock. Our work with former death row prisoners in Malawi who were awaiting resentencing, which included interviewing them in-person at the prison and then collecting mitigating evidence for their release, was an eye-opening experience of the impact we lawyers can have on the lives of others.

Keith Armstrong LLM ’21, Litigation Fellow, RAICES

At the end of September, I began working as a Litigation Fellow at RAICES, an immigrant rights organization based in Texas, on a public interest fellowship funded by Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. As a member of RAICES’ litigation team, I am involved in cases that seek to hold the government and its contractors accountable for violating the rights of migrants and asylum
seekers. Much of the work supports migrants who faced harm in the vast American immigration detention system, had their due process rights violated during their immigration proceedings, or were otherwise prevented from asserting their right to asylum.

I arrived at Northwestern Law committed to advancing human rights, but had many disparate ideas about my specific focus. During my first two summers, I worked on issues related to corporate accountability and international justice. However, I grew increasingly passionate about migrant rights through volunteer work with the International Refugee Assistance Project, the Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights, and Al Otro Lado, a binational migrant rights organization based in Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, California. I also spent my 3L summer with the National Immigrant Justice Center.

In Professor Bridget Arimond’s International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic, I helped draft a report on human rights abuses occurring in privatized immigration detention facilities for the United Nations Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries. The disturbing details that emerged from my research deepened my commitment to upholding migrant rights. During my international externship, a springboard into my career.

**Reilly Frye LLM ’21, Border Legal Fellow, UNHCR**

My fellowship at the UNHCR has only recently begun, but already I’ve been exposed to many learning opportunities. My role involves working to expand legal support and legal empowerment for asylum-seekers at the border through UNHCR-led cross-border programs. In this capacity, I get exposure to legal organizations, community organizers, local governments, and international organizations in West Texas, New Mexico, and Juarez, MX. My role emphasizes the need to stay current on legal, political, and policy developments that impact refugees and asylum seekers at the border. My favorite part of the fellowship, so far, is being introduced to this community of actors that are all working to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees.

I knew coming into law school that I wanted to work with migrant populations once I graduated. I also knew that I wanted to approach immigration in the U.S. with an international lens. Northwestern’s J.D./LL.M. program gave me the foundation that I needed in domestic law, while also allowing me to explore how domestic law relates to, and can be improved by, international law. For example, one semester, I was enrolled in the Immigration Clinic, helping to represent an asylum seeker from Guatemala, while also taking a class on International Human Rights Law. We covered the Convention Against Torture (CAT) in class at the same time that our team in the Clinic was asking for CAT relief for our client. That experience showed me that it’s not only practical to understand domestic law through an international lens, but it also leads to creative thinking. I wrote my Comment on applying an international criminal law framework to the domestic immigration issue of family separation. The J.D./LL.M. program was crucial in enabling me to write that Comment, as I had access to both domestic and international lawyers who I could consult and brainstorm with throughout the process.

I also believe that my involvement in the Migrants Rights Project, a collaboration between CIHR and the International Children’s Rights Advocacy Clinic, led directly to my current fellowship. We worked with lawyers on the border and in the interior, as well as individuals who were currently and formerly detained to write reports to various human rights mechanisms. The project gave me the practical background on border actors and policies, in conjunction with training on human rights instruments, that I needed to be able to step into my current role.

The highlight of my J.D./LL.M experience was a CIHR trip to
Myanmar in 2020. I was honored to be included in a group of three students who were asked to write a shadow report on behalf of a Muslim non-governmental organization in Yangon. We interviewed over 30 Muslim leaders, attorneys, and activists on the discrimination against non-Rohingya Muslims to submit for Myanmar’s Universal Periodic Review. My training in person-first interviewing at the Immigration Clinic gave me the tools I needed to conduct trauma-informed interviews with these men, and my LL.M. classes allowed me to match the human rights violations they discussed to the international law necessary to write a compelling report—for example, the burning of mosques and Article 18 of the ICCPR. I think of these men and their bravery often as we hear news of the military junta in Myanmar today.

Prapoosa KC LLM IHR ’20, Legal Associate, Green Law Associates LTD

I am working as a Partner at a Human Rights-based law firm. Our firm files petitions to the Supreme Court of Nepal against violations of Fundamental Rights of our clients by the State authorities. Simultaneously, I am working as a part-time Assistant Professor of Law at Kathmandu School of Law, my alma mater for my undergrad degree. I am also writing a report about Conflict Related to Sexual Violence in Nepal with Professor Gabriella Citroni, who is a member of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

Tetyana Yarameko LLM ’18, Associate, Quinn Emanuel

I graduated from an IHR-LLM program with honors in 2018 and presently work as an associate at Quinn Emanuel law firm in London. I am mostly engaged in complex international contentious matters, including against sovereign states. For instance, I act for a Ukrainian state bank in an investment treaty claim against the Russian Federation arising from the expropriation of the bank’s assets in Crimea. This case is an example of an attempt to defy Russia’s impunity for its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. I also remain involved in pro bono activities and each year I sign up to judge the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court competition.

The IHR-LLM program was fundamental in shaping my understanding of international law and its role in vindicating human rights violations. In this context, I especially value the human rights advocacy course and the international human rights advocacy clinic, taught by Professor Bridget Arimond. Classes with Professors Scheffer and Sawyer likewise provided me with a thorough understanding of international criminal law and United Nations law. My overall learning experience during the IHR-LLM program was exceptional, intellectually stimulating and very hands-on.

Trilce Gabriela Valdivia Aguilar LLM ’18, Lecturer, Universidad Católica San Pablo

Currently, I am working as a full-time lecturer at Universidad Católica San Pablo in Arequipa, Peru. My activities involve teaching Human Rights Law and Constitutional Law courses. As part of my research activities, last year I worked on a monograph book concerning the right to privacy in the Peruvian Legal System. This monograph is part of a collection of books celebrating the bicentennial of Peruvian independence. It aims to be written in simple language, so people who are not lawyers or not specialized in law can read it and gain knowledge concerning the margins of protection of fundamental rights. Also, I coordinate the legal clinic, which I helped create two years ago. We have different projects. Currently, the most important one involves granting legal services to Venezuelan immigrants in the country.

My year at Northwestern was one of the most challenging but also most rewarding experiences of my life. Obtaining a master’s degree allowed me to gain a position in the faculty of a Peruvian law school and to widen my research perspectives and my understanding of the legal profession. I don’t regret taking not only the classes in the human rights specialization, but also exploring classes on US Constitutional Law and Comparative Law, a chance I did not have during my JD studies in Peru.

During my spring semester I had the chance to participate in the Legal Clinic advocating for the rights of transgender women in Guatemala. We presented a shadow report to the Human Rights Committee and traveled to Geneva for the oral pleadings. Being directly coached by Professor Bridget Arimond on the improvement of my writing and oral skills, interviewing clients, and personally defending them at an institution of the relevance of the UN Human Rights Committee was a dream come true and convinced me to create a similar space for my future
Q&A with
Mariana Scolaro ’20,
Associate Consultant,
One South

What was your experience like as a Schuette Global Fellow at the Center for Reproductive Rights?

I was a Legal Fellow at the Global Legal Strategies (GLS) unit of the Center. When I joined, the unit had been created recently, so there was a lot of room for shaping and developing our role and impact within the Center at large, which was exciting. It was a truly rich experience since I had the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of activities.

I provided technical support, legal research and analysis to the GLS team, by delivering technical assistance and legal research to the Capacity and Consent Working Group in order to actively support the development of legal principles on capacity and consent by the end of Fiscal Year 2021; conducting legal research and analysis to support the maintenance of the World Abortion Laws Map, as well as providing technical assistance to external audiences when requested; and supporting the development of the litigation tracking tool through legal research and analysis of relevant jurisprudence.

I addressed emerging reproductive rights legal issues by conducting legal research and writing to enhance knowledge dissemination on key reproductive rights concepts through the development of factsheets relating to the impact of sexual and reproductive rights during the Covid-19 pandemic. I coordinated and provided technical assistance to pro bono attorneys of eight partner law firms as they researched laws and policies around telemedicine and self-managed abortion in countries around the world and conducted both qualitative and quantitative analysis of that research in support of this mapping project.

I actively contributed to the GLS’ strategic plan. I actively supported institutional objectives by periodically fielding legal inquiries through the “legal intake” email inbox.

I would also like to mention that I had the opportunity to work alongside six amazing women: Alejandra Cárdenas, Katherine Mayall, Emma Chessen, Emily Walsh, Jamie Hanson and my direct supervisor Margaret Harpin. They all were definitely a highlight of my experience as a Fellow. Working and learning from such inspiring women made the difference for all the good reasons.

How has your experience at Northwestern’s LLM program shaped your career?

One of the main features that
attracted me the most to Northwestern’s IHR LLM program was the opportunity to enroll in the clinical experience offered by the Center for International Human Rights of the University. And it was precisely the cases I had the privilege to work on at the Center that led me to become a Schuette Global Fellow, and now work in projects with a health and human rights issues focus.

I had the invaluable opportunity to be part of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Project during my Fall semester when I enrolled in the International Human Rights Clinic, which involved drafting an Amicus Curiae to support four cases before the UN Human Rights Committee, in relation to the right to a life with dignity and access to legal and safe abortion, in partnership with the Center for Reproductive Rights and Planned Parenthood Global. This experience sparked my interest in health and human rights issues and made me understand that guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health rights is critical to protect fundamental liberties and, therefore, necessary to break the cycles of poverty created by systems that overrule freedom of choice and autonomy. Before Northwestern I had developed my experience in international human rights law around other areas. However, on very few occasions had I felt more fulfilled and inspired than the times I spent collaborating on that Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Project at the Clinic. That mission chose me then, and I keep choosing it every day.

Currently, I am working as an Associate Consultant for One South, which is an international development consulting and research firm that supports organizations to understand and deliver social change. We invest in local capacity to access challenging contexts and provide expert planning, monitoring, and evaluation advice. Our goal is to support decision-makers in the global south to design relevant interventions, improve upon selected strategies, and deliver impactful social programs through applied research.

In particular, I am currently involved in three projects, all related to health and human rights issues: I am providing technical support, research and analysis to the consultancy team for a project with UNESCO, consisting in a situation analysis on comprehensive sexuality education in secondary schools in Malawi; actively supporting the coordination and execution of the final relevance, effectiveness and sustainability evaluation on the “Afford II” Program implemented by HelpAge, which aims to improve the quality of life of older persons by contributing altogether to the development of inclusive, effective and rights-based social protection systems in Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania; and also actively supporting the coordination and application of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework to the “Umunthu” Program, implemented by the Art and Global Health Centre Africa, which aims to promote health access as a fundamental human right of LGBTI people in Malawi.

What was the highlight of your LLM experience?

It is almost impossible to choose just one highlight of my LLM experience, which I think speaks great things about both the program and Northwestern. I would like to mention at least three:

Enrolling in Clinic both semesters was one of the best decisions I could have made. It played a fundamental role in my career choices after finishing the program and it was such a great experience overall. I even got the opportunity to travel to Geneva and make a presentation at a side event of the United Nations Human Rights Committee to talk about the physical, mental, and social health consequences of forced motherhood as part of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Project.

I had the opportunity to be the student coach of Northwestern’s team before the Price Media Law Moot Court competition. Being the moot court enthusiast that I am, this was a truly amazing experience. It was as challenging as it was rewarding, and I would strongly recommend students to join the team, which is also an opportunity to enjoy a closer learning experience from one of my dearest Professors at Northwestern, Doreen Weisenhaus.

Now, a common highlight of all my LLM experience was the brilliant, caring and truly marvelous people I met along the way. I am eternally grateful to the program for the mentors and friendships I gained during my time at Northwestern. I had never been in an environment where I felt so much admiration and motivation every day. If I had to sum up, I would say that feeling permanently inspired was the highlight of my LLM experience.
More Alumni Stories

Marco Bocchese LLM '10, Assistant Professor, Webster Vienna Private University

After obtaining a law degree in his home country of Italy, Marco Bocchese pursued his interest in international law through Northwestern’s LLM program. During his time at Northwestern, Bocchese was particularly influenced by Professor David Scheffer’s International Criminal Law course. At Northwestern, Bocchese valued the opportunity to learn from experts and professors with firsthand knowledge of the international criminal law field. Other influential professors included Professor Bridget Arimond and Stephen Sawyer, both of whom later served as recommenders for his PHD application. After he finished his LLM degree, Bocchese sought to further his knowledge of the political, diplomatic and socioeconomic perspectives of the international criminal law field. His PHD research in Political Science addressed judicial cooperation with ICC investigations and prosecutions. He credits Professor Jide Nzelibe for his advice and guidance throughout his dissertation writing process. While pursuing his PHD, Bocchese published a piece on the impact of international prosecutions on war continuations in the Washington International Law Journal Association. Additionally, he published a scholarly article for the NYU Journal of International Law and Politics exploring the relationship between the ICC and State Sovereignty. After obtaining his PHD, Bocchese taught as an Adjunct Professor and later a Visiting Assistant Professor at UIC, teaching undergrad courses in International Law and Political Science. Bocchese has contributed scholarly writings to the Journal of Conflict and Security Law, the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs and the International Journal of Human Rights. In January, 2020, he was invited to teach Professor David Scheffer’s course International Criminal Law at Northwestern. For Bocchese, this was a dream come true, to transition from LLM, to PHD, and later to teach a course at Northwestern previously taught by his favorite Professor. Bocchese currently holds an Assistant Professor position at Webster Vienna Private University in Vienna, Austria where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Comparative Politics, Political Violence, and International Law and Relations.

Bocchese’s research interests include international criminal law, judicial cooperation with ICC investigations and prosecutions focused on West Africa. Bocchese has traveled extensively for his research to international conferences and to conduct interviews in Ethiopia, New York for the UN General Assembly, the Ivory Coast, Colombia and Georgia. While traveling for his research Bocchese speaks with NGOs, experts in crimes against humanity, state authorities, ICC field officers, state officials from the justice department, politicians from all parties, and diplomats exploring domestic cooperation with ongoing ICC investigations and prosecutions. He hopes to conduct research in Ukraine in the future. Bocchese’s LLM experience and later his PhD in Political Science proved invaluable to his development as an international law and politics scholar.

Sara Elizabeth Dill LLM ’14, Partner, Antheum Global

Sara Elizabeth Dill provides legal representation and strategic consulting for individuals, corporations, governments, and non-governmental associations. Her areas of focus include international law, human rights, foreign affairs, sanctions, war crimes, Sharia law, crossborder finance, and anti-corruption. Her work is primarily in the MENA and Arabian Gulf regions, but she is active in the UK, EU, and US. In 2019, Dill was appointed as the International Bar Association’s Arab Region liaison officer for war crimes and international criminal law.

In recent months, Dill has worked pro bono as an advisor and consultant on war crimes investigations in Afghanistan, and is part of a high level working group assisting with evacuation and resettlement of Afghans, in particular, Afghan women judges. She also served as an advisor to the UN and various governments as to the human rights considerations in emergency legislation enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Oftentimes her work involves examining existing legislation in a nation, and then highlighting what aspects pose a problem under international human rights law, and making recommendations for reform. She also consults on human rights litigation.

Dill has published numerous articles in recent years on international law, criminal defense, immigration, terrorism, human trafficking and free speech. She has spoken at international and national legal
conferences regarding war crimes, human rights, immigration and criminal law, human trafficking, and national security / counter-terrorism matters, including her TEDx Talk, “Women Are Not Weapons Of War.” (With a special thanks to Professor Jason DeSanto for stepping up as a last-minute coach and consigliere in the weeks before the talk).

In 2014, Dill served as a rapporteur to the UN Commission Against Torture. In January 2016, she presented her publication, A Bleak House in Cuba: A Call for Reform and the Closure of Guantanamo, at the Legal Challenges of Modern Warfare Conference at The Hague.

Dill was a founding member of the Dulles Justice Coalition, an organization of lawyers quickly mobilized to provide legal assistance in response to the Muslim Ban and to engage in policy advocacy and litigation to attempt to remove unlawful restrictions on and discrimination against Muslims. She serves on the board of Vantage Point, an innovative use of virtual reality to provide training and raise awareness on sexual harassment and assault. Most recently, Dill was named as a senior board member for Blue Tulip Human Rights Group for her work with purged Turkish military personnel and as a board member of O-Bazaar, working to empower and mentor Afghan women.

Dill’s work would not be possible without her LLM in International Human Rights Law - and especially the influence and care of Professor David Scheffer. Not only did it provide her with the foundation of knowledge and skills, but it expanded her international network. Dill frequently reaches out to her professors from Northwestern Law to participate in panels or work on new endeavors.

**Simon Crowther LLM ’13, Legal Advisor, Amnesty International**

Simon Crowther is a Legal Advisor at Amnesty International in London, where he has worked for three years. His areas of focus include counterterrorism, criminal justice and the right to freedom of peace of assembly. His role involves litigation in international courts, UN Advocacy and advising Amnesty’s researchers on human rights violations around the world. At the moment, Crowther’s work focuses on Guantanamo Bay, where he is engaged in efforts to apply pressure on the Biden administration, lawmakers and the U.S public. Other areas of interest include protest movements in Hong Kong and Belarus.

In a recent project, Simon advised Amnesty’s researchers on the global use of police battons, analyzing over 200 videos and assessing the legal authority in various countries to use battons. Crowther graduated from the LLM program in 2013. Highlights of the program for him were the incredible clinical education and the professors, specifically Bridget Arimond, who always showed dedication to her students, particularly the international students whom she welcomed with open arms. At Northwestern, Crowther honed his legal writing skills, drafting documents for the court, working on the high-level court case Kiobel vs. Shell and gaining direct advocacy experience. Through the clinic, Crowther traveled to Cambodia where he worked as a trial monitor, monitoring a war crimes tribunal. When Crowther returned to the UK after graduating from the LLM program, his direct advocacy experience in drafting documents for courts and having working in Cambodia proved invaluable to his international law career and led to various opportunities, notably working as a Research intern and consultant at the Southern Africa Litigation Center. Outside of work, Simon frequently advises students at Universities on careers in international law—he has advised students at the University of London and Northwestern. He has served on roundtables as an expert on issues of counterterrorism and statelessness. He contributes to Just Security, an online forum which focuses on the analysis of issues of foreign policy, national security and rights. He previously contributed to The Guardian on issues of counterterrorism. He was recently featured on an Aljazeera Documentary “Inside Story” where he spoke about Guantanamo Bay. Additionally, he has previously served as Amnesty’s Spokesperson on Julian Assange.
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Faculty

Thomas Geraghty
Class of 1967 James B. Haddad Professor of Law; Director Emeritus Bluhm Legal Clinic; Interim Director Center for International Human Rights

David Scheffer
Mayer Brown/Robert A. Helman Professor of Law Emeritus

Bridget Arimond
Clinical Professor of Law; Director, LLM Program for International Human Rights

Stephen Sawyer
Clinical Associate Professor of Law

Juliet Sorensen
Clinical Professor of Law; Director, Northwestern Access to Health Project; Clinical Professor of Strategy, Kellogg School of Management (Courtesy)

Carolyn Frazier
Clinical Associate Professor of Law

Alexandra Tarzikhan
Schuette Clinical Fellow in Health & Human Rights

Classes

A New World Order: the Role of the United Nations in Advancing the Rule of Law and Individual Rights

Access to Justice in the U.S. and in the Developing World

Colloquium: International Human Rights

Health and Human Rights

Human Rights Advocacy: Legal Analysis and Writing

International Children’s Rights Advocacy

International Criminal Law

International Human Rights

International Human Rights Advocacy

International Human Rights Law and Practice

International Human Rights Law: Differing Perspectives, Europe, the Americas, the US

Faculty Publications

CAROLYN FRAZIER

THOMAS GERAGHTY

“Enhancing Legal Education in Ethiopia: Building On a Distinguished Past To Build A Better LL.B. Curriculum Including Clinical Legal Education and Legal Aid” Addis Ababa University, School of Law. 2021.

DAVID SCHEFFER


“Foreword” No Place for Optimism: Anticipating Myanmar’s First Report to the International Court of Justice (Sarata Ashraf, Author). 2020.


JULIET SORENSEN
Human Rights and Corruption (Edward Elgar). 2021

“El Salvador’s abortion ban jails women for miscarriages and stillbirths – now one woman’s family seeks international justice,” (with Alexandra Tarzikhan) The Conversation. 2021


“Why the Cook County Ethics Ordinance Needs Reform,” (with Peggy Daley) Crain’s Chicago Business. 2020