

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON
COLLEGE OF LAW



**Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law
Annual Report 2019-2020**

American University Washington College of Law established the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law as part of its long-standing commitment to international human rights and the rule of law. For 30 years, the Center has worked with students, faculty, and the international legal community to provide support for human rights initiatives in the U.S. and around the world through teaching, scholarship, and service.

The Center engages in exciting innovations in human rights education and advocacy by way of training, complementary education, outreach, workshops, conferences, research, and publications. All Center programming promotes the value of service, thereby grounding the Center as a core resource for international organizations, governments, and the NGO community, and as a bridge between academia and civil society.

Key Numbers for 2019-2020



\$2,219,400 in active grants and received gifts

15 student research assistants

29 students in **2** seminars

5 specialized fellows and visiting scholars

6 students join **17th** Student Advisory Board

52 student staffers on the *Human Rights Brief*

10 legal interventions

7,255 Facebook followers & **2,642** Twitter followers

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LETTER FROM

ACTING DEAN ROBERT DINERSTEIN



I am honored to present the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law's 2019-2020 Annual Report. I have been a member of the WCL faculty since 1983 and since that time, I have had the privilege of participating in the Center's long-established efforts to broaden human rights programming and scholarship, particularly in the area of disability rights. Over the years, I have worked closely with the Center to examine the important and emerging intersections of disability rights and human rights, such as the adoption and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), through conferences, scholarship, specialized fellowships (principally the Open Society Foundation's Disability Rights Scholarship Program), and collaboration with leading NGOs.

This year, the Center continued to demonstrate its commitment—grounded in its 30 years of service—to advancing and promoting human rights in the U.S. and around the world. Its education, research, and advocacy activities were supported by outstanding faculty members and dedicated staff who are actively involved in teaching, scholarship, and litigation. The Center's numerous and dynamic collaborations with expert faculty, main campus colleagues, and global civil society partners is a testament to its mission of serving as a bridge between academia and civil society. In addition to highlighting the Center's many accomplishments over the past year, this report also celebrates its 30-year journey. The challenges faculty and staff have tackled in their research, the opportunities our students have embraced in the classroom, and the solutions our alumni have brought to complex human rights problems over the past three decades are real-life examples that illustrate the Center's legacy of enriching and influencing global, national, and local conversations on human rights.

The academic year ahead will look and feel different from anything we have seen before as our university community and our nation confront a global pandemic, the economic fallout it has caused, and structural racism. To prepare for these challenges, the Center team has skillfully marshalled the creativity and compassion of our students, staff, and faculty innovators to shape the global conversation around human rights. I look forward to continuing to work with the Center as it strives to accomplish its commitment to protecting and promoting human rights and the rule of law.

Robert Dinerstein
Acting Dean and Professor of Law

LETTER FROM THE

FACULTY DIRECTOR & ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



The year 2020 has been a significant milestone in the lifespan of the Center. It marks 30 years since the Center's founding and the fifth anniversary of our tenure as faculty director and associate director of the Center. It has also marked one of the most challenging periods in the Center's history, with the emergence of a global pandemic and an ensuing economic crisis, while our nation reckons with its devastating history of structural racism and discrimination. This context not only shapes how we reflect on the last 30 years, it also impacts what, for the Center, comes next.

The pages of this annual report capture the ways in which our dedicated faculty, staff, students and alumni have created, modeled, and embodied the values of integrity and service over the past year. The expansion in number and scope of our projects led us to review our structure and redefine our work through the lens of Education & Training, Research & Scholarship, and Litigation & Advocacy. We broadened the scope of student research opportunities and connected more students than ever with organizations and projects outside WCL. We expanded our grant-funded research initiatives to include two new projects and engaged in strategic advocacy with over a dozen legal interventions, including petitions, reports, and amicus briefs. We have done all this with the same sense of urgency and responsibility towards the protection of rights of all people that has guided the work of the Center since its beginnings.

The Center has evolved continuously over the last 30 years, yet our values remain unchanged. We are proud of our history and the collective legacies of the Center's faculty, alumni, and staff. What the Center must now grapple with is how the crises of today will redefine how, when, and where the Center pursues its mission in the long-term. As we face our present and look toward the future, the Center remains dedicated to training new generations of lawyers committed to human rights, with a sense of empathy and active engagement against racism. We will continue our work shaping international law, strengthening standards, and collaborating with partners across the world to reduce spaces of vulnerability and protect the rights of the most marginalized individuals.

Macarena Sáez
Faculty Director

Melissa del Aguila
Associate Director

Reflections from the last 30 years...

1990

Professors Robert Goldman, Claudio Grossman & Herman Schwartz establish the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law



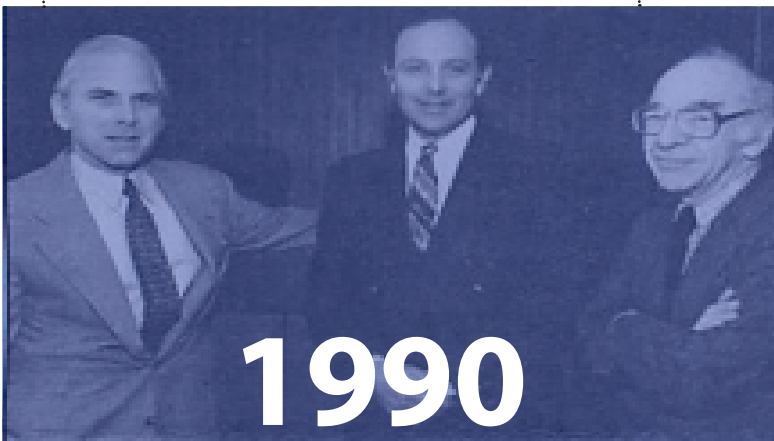
1994

The Center publishes first issue of the *Human Rights Brief*, oldest student-run brief at AUWCL



1996

Hosts first iteration of the Inter-American Human Rights Moot Court Competition



Our commitment for the next 30 years...

As we look ahead, the Center remains dedicated to training new generations of lawyers committed to justice, and working with partners to ensure that human rights are respected and humanitarian law is enforced.



2020

The Center turns 30!



2018

Expansion of global research initiatives focused on election monitoring, strategic litigation, gender equality, trans rights, and access to justice



2000

Start of the Human Rights Film Series, longest running cross-campus collaboration

2003

Convenes first cohort of the Student Advisory Board, deepening student engagement with the Center

2004

Launch of Genocide Teaching Project in commemoration of 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide



2007

Releases first institutional publication, "Teaching International Humanitarian Law at U.S. Law Schools"

2009

Receives first \$1 million grant to support collaborative exchange with University of Peshawar to enhance human rights teaching and scholarship

2000

2016

Issues first publication in thematic scholarship series; moves to Tenley campus, leaving its long term residence at the 4910 Annex

2015

Experiential learning opportunities expand to include Impact Litigation Project & Kovler Project Against Torture (formerly UN CAT Project)

2013

Publishes 1st edition of "Human Rights in the US: A Handbook for Legal Aid Attorneys"

2005

2010

2011

Expands scope of work with launch of Anti-Torture Initiative, Disability Fellowship & Local Human Rights Lawyering Project

Our Pillars

Today's human rights challenges are complex, multi-faceted, and entrenched in historical systems of oppression. They require approaches, tools, and ideas that are integrative and grounded in local perspectives. The Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law advances American University's broader mission by championing a holistic teaching, research, and advocacy agenda. Our team brings a global, multi-disciplinary approach to human rights scholarship and advocacy to cultivate the next generation of human rights advocates.



Litigation & Advocacy

Strengthening the rule of law and providing a foundation for access to justice that helps defend and safeguard human rights around the world



Research & Scholarship

Supporting theoretical and applied research that investigates and models ways to promote, protect, and defend human rights



Education & Training

Promoting widespread understanding of human rights through teaching, service, and learning beyond the traditional law school curriculum



EDUCATION & TRAINING

Promoting widespread understanding of human rights through teaching, service, and learning beyond the traditional law school curriculum

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Our specialized curricula and on-campus activities support student learning of human rights issues, frameworks, and lawyering skills, through student leadership activities, expert discussions, specialized seminars, and workshops. Our cross-campus programming and community engagement activities focus on initiatives with an array of partners throughout the DC metro area, across the U.S., and in countries around the world.

Specialized Curricula

In 2012, the Center partnered with the Open Society Foundations' (OSF) Disability Rights Scholarship Program to launch its **Disability & Human Rights Fellowship Program**. The program brings attorneys from various parts of the world to AUWCL to engage in a specialized course of study focused on disability and human rights. The program provides disability rights advocates with the necessary expertise to engage in impact litigation and to develop new legislation, jurisprudence, and scholarship.

The Center has hosted 20 fellows from nine countries, many of whom now work in high-level positions in national governments and inter-governmental organizations. This fall, the Center welcomed its eighth cohort of Disability and Human Rights Fellows, Bol G. Diing Bul, a public interest lawyer from South Sudan, and Bernard Otieno, an advocate of the High Court and Court of Appeals of Tanzania.

The **Kovler Project Against Torture** (KPAT) is a unique experiential learning opportunity where students are responsible for providing strategic advice to the United Nations Committee against Torture on whether countries are in compliance with the extensive obliga-

tions outlined in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Established in 2003 by Professor and Dean Emeritus Claudio Grossman (during his tenure as member and chair of the UNCAT), the practicum's overarching educational goal is to provide students with the opportunity to assist an important supervisory organ of the UN in its goal of implementing the prohibition of torture and other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment.

In November, ten students traveled to Geneva to attend the first week of the Committee's 68th Session. During this trip, KPAT also hosted its annual dinner with members of the UNHCR, UN representatives from Chile and Mexico, legal advisors to the ICRC and the International Commission of Jurists, among others. This spring, KPAT selected its seventeenth cohort of students who will provide strategic advice to the United Nations Committee against Torture.

The **Impact Litigation Project** (ILP) aims to strengthen the rule of law through litigation and advocacy. Every year, the ILP works with students from the Seminar on Strategic Litigation in International Human Rights. AUWCL students have the opportunity to collaborate on supervised cases with the potential to achieve broad and lasting impact on public policy and legislation. In addition to documenting human rights violations, this project seeks to promote government accountability, expand public education and awareness, and provide a foundation for future litigation that helps defend and safeguard human rights around the world. During AY 2019-2020, the Project worked with approximately 19 J.D. and LL.M. students, Humphrey Fellows, and visiting



Kover students in front of Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland

scholars on a variety of human rights issues, including human rights abuses against the Uyghurs, anti-torture, and arbitrary detention. In February, the ILP hosted a panel discussion examining comparative law perspectives on the right of children of same-sex couples to have both parents legally recognized under law. Speakers included leading family law and LGBTQI experts, and a petitioner before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Student Engagement

The Center is dedicated to the continuing education and empowerment of its student body in the area of human rights and humanitarian law. We offer exciting ways for students to get involved, starting from year one. Students can join the Center's Student Advisory Board, participate in our Moot Court team, or apply for one of the Center's several research assistant opportunities.

The Center's **Student Advisory Board** (SAB) provides students interested in and committed to human rights the opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation of Center programming, and to learn tangi-

ble skills beyond the classroom for effective advocacy and activism.

This fall, the 2019 SAB sponsored panels on children's rights and national security, and organized a week long mini-lecture series, bringing together professors and students to talk about today's hottest legal topics in the United States. In January, a multi-disciplinary team of AU faculty, staff, students, and alumni selected the SAB as a 2019-2020 Inclusive Excellence Mini-Grant recipient to develop cross-institutional collaborative approaches to understanding positionality and privilege.

Since the onset of COVID-19, the SAB has been connecting remotely and working on various research projects. In February, the Center welcomed its seventeenth Student Advisory Board: Chris Baumohl (JD '22), Madison Bingle (JD '22), Inka Boehm (JD '22), Ryann Castleman (JD '22), Megan Cox (JD '22), and Paulina Lucio Maymon (JD '22).

AUWCL was poised to host the **2020 International Day of Crisis Moot Court Competition**, following the Center team's award

Prof. Ezra Rosser leads SAB mini-lecture on indigenous rights



winning participation last year in Paris. AUWCL is the first and only U.S.-based team to be invited to participate in the competition, organized by the Universite de Paris Nanterre and the Centre de Droit International de Nanterre. After an exceptionally competitive application process, Madison Bingle (JD '22), Meagan DeSimone (JD '21), Khatia Mikadze (JD '21), and Benjamin Phillips (JD '20) were selected to represent AUWCL at this year's competition. However, given the travel restrictions due to COVID-19, organizers had to postpone this year's competition.

The Center involves student **research assistants** in all aspects of its programming. Every Center project prioritizes the creation of unique opportunities for skills-building and intellectual rigor for its students at all stages of their legal education. This year, the Center offered 15 research opportunities on various issues within the human rights field.

In addition to supporting general activities and ongoing research initiatives on topics such as land tenure and indigenous rights,

the Center also created a number of research opportunities for students to support the work of external initiatives including, the work of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, the Institut de Droit International's work on pandemics and international law, and the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

Events & Activities

This past year, the Center hosted a variety of events that addressed pressing human rights issues, including panel discussions, workshops, seminars, and expert convenings. Highlights include:

This fall, the Center welcomed over 100 incoming students at its annual welcome reception and hosted its flagship lunchtime learning activities, including four sessions of its Human Rights 101 series introducing first year students to human rights law and its intersections with disability rights, business, and environmental law. It also hosted its Human Rights Reading Group where students, faculty, and staff discussed, in four sessions, critical perspectives on human rights.

The Center undertook a number of cross-campus education initiatives in the fall, including a human rights site visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Muse-



um with colleagues from the AU School of Professional & Extension Studies and a film screening about child sex trafficking in the District of Columbia with the AU Health Promotion and Advocacy Center. In November, the Center partnered with the International Comparative Legal Studies Program's Hubert H. Humphrey Fellows as they discussed current topics related to children's rights across the world, including juvenile justice, child participation in justice proceedings, street children, and child protection systems.

The Center partnered with the ACLU, the Association for the Prevention of Torture, and Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, among others, to host a film screening of *The Long Haul*, a documentary inspired by the life of human rights pioneer Sir Nigel Rodley that examines the current wave against human rights around the world. The Center also co-sponsored a panel discussion with Georgetown University in February addressing lessons learned from America's post-9/11 era for the prevention of torture and the conduct of ethical, evidence-based national security interrogation.

This year, the Center joined Films Across Borders, a consortium of American University entities, embassies, arts institutions, and environmental groups, that presents a series of films on a distinctive, timely and compelling theme each year. The Center is working with partners to organize the 2020 series, now in its sixth year, which brings together diverse cinematic stories about resilience and hope.

In the spring, the Center joined a consortium of university-based human rights centers and select NGOs in co-sponsoring a virtual speaker series, COVID-19: Advancing Rights and Justice during a Pandemic, addressing topics related to COVID-19 and social justice, including the right to education, business and human rights, and the rights of persons with disabilities, among others.

This spring and summer, Professors Juan E. Méndez and Macarena Sáez led a series of capacity building trainings on anti-torture for public defenders as part of an initiative with Laboratorio de Litigio Estructural and the Mexican Federal Institute of the Public Defender's Office.

Student Spotlight: *Jillian Marshall, JD '21*

Jillian Marshall was selected for a competitive Summer Clerkship at Colombia's Transitional Justice Court (Justicia Especial para la Paz). The clerkship, sponsored by the Center, provides law students with the opportunity to work directly with those involved in the trials of individuals accused of gross human rights violations. As a law clerk, Ms. Marshall conducted research on diverse international criminal law issues, such as the principle of legality, ICC jurisprudence on crimes against humanity, and prisoner exchange in non-international armed conflicts. She also advised on comparative domestic criminal law and on documentation about FARC-EP's hostage-taking operations.





RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

Supporting theoretical and applied research that investigates and models ways to promote, protect, and defend human rights

RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

The Center's research and scholarship activities seek to promote legal research and social scientific methodologies, theories, and ethics that can be harnessed by civil society, institutions, and advocates to advance impactful and innovative solutions to critical human rights challenges. The Center creates and supports research and scholarship organized around robust interdisciplinary agendas for academic audiences, human rights practitioners, and other stakeholders.

Projects & Initiatives

The Center seeks to stimulate debate and research about the human rights responsibilities of central banks through its **Project on Central Banks and Human Rights**. Implemented in partnership with the University of Pretoria's Centre for Human Rights under the leadership of Professor Danny Bradlow, the Project organized a convening of experts to examine how the human rights responsibilities of central banks relate to their monetary, lender of last resort, regulatory, and financial stability functions. The Project is currently planning several workshops over the next year where experts from various fields related to banking, finance, and social and economic rights will explore, in more detail, this groundbreaking new area of study.

In November, the Center received a grant to launch the **Initiative on Transparency and Election Monitoring**, a one-year research initiative that supports ongoing efforts to strengthen standards and transparency in the nomination and election of judges and commissioners to the Inter-American Human Rights System. This research will culminate in a publication that will outline identified methodologies and best practices for interviewing and evaluating candidates.

With the project's partners, the Center for Justice and International Law and Due Process of Law Foundation, the Initiative also seeks to promote the involvement of other academic institutions through strategic coalition network building. In January, the Center welcomed Argentinean lawyer and AUWCL international visiting scholar Maria Julia Dellasoppa as the Initiative's coordinator and lead researcher.

In November, the Center received funding from the Open Society Justice Initiative to support research conducted by independent experts on how to achieve better policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct within international and regional human rights bodies. The four-month project culminated in a final report by the **Expert Panel on Combatting Sexual Misconduct in Human Rights Organizations**.

Student, Scholar & Faculty Research

A student-run publication of the Center, the **Human Rights Brief** provides legal analysis of cutting-edge human rights issues. This past year, the Brief experienced great success, contributing articles, editing pieces, and working with practitioners around the world to further scholarship. In addition to co-sponsoring a host of events on current human rights topics, the Brief held a series of specialized workshops to promote inclusiveness and professionalism, working with faculty experts to train staff on how to use appropriate language in writing, particularly with respect to gender and disability.

In February, its annual symposium, "Examining Conditions of Confinement: Adults and Children Deprived of Human Rights," featured experts who discussed conditions of women, LGBTQI persons, and children in

detention. In May, the Brief unveiled its new website and a new podcast series, "Human Rights Unscripted." The podcast uses the power of storytelling to explore different human rights issues, as well as stories from those who have dedicated their lives to working in human rights. This spring, the Brief partnered with AUWCL's *Health Law and Policy Brief* to jointly publish a Special COVID-19 Edition for the fall.

The Center offers **visiting scholars and practitioners** diverse opportunities to spend a summer, semester or year at AUWCL conducting research, supporting our programs, and sharing experiences with students, with a distinguished group of peers. Meet this year's affiliated visiting scholars and fellows!

- *Maria Julia Dellasoppa*: This winter, international visiting scholar Maria Julia Dellasoppa joined the Center as the Initiative on Transparency and Election Monitoring's lead researcher. Ms. Dellasoppa is an Argentine human rights lawyer who received her LL.M.

from UCLA. Prior to coming to AUWCL, Ms. Dellasoppa was a Romulo Gallegos Legal Fellow with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

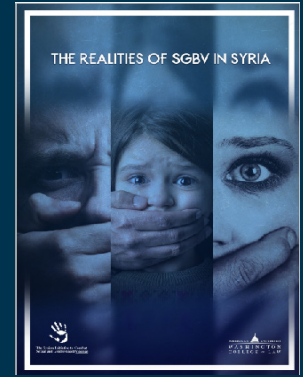
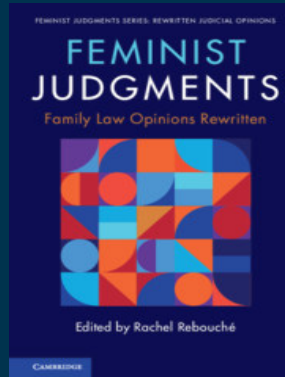
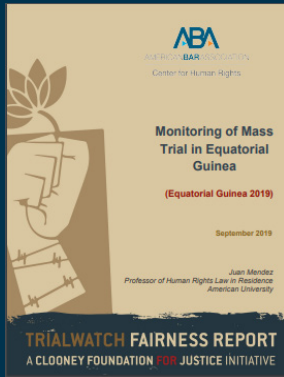
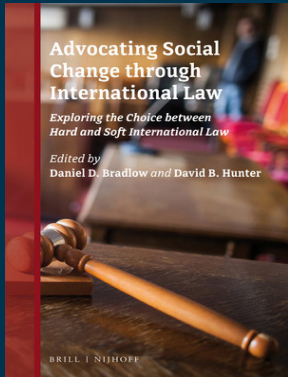
- *Georgiana Grozescu*: This spring, the Center welcomed Ms. Grozescu, a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow and former assistant magistrate in the High Court of Cassation and Justice of Romania, as a Legal Fellow. Ms. Grozescu, who specializes in children's rights, domestic violence, and civil rights violations, supported research on links between strategic litigation and access to justice for vulnerable communities.

- *Ira Papagjika*: This fall, the Center welcomed Ira Papagjika, a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow and former deputy commissioner within the office of the Albanian Ombudsman, as a Legal Fellow. Ms. Papagjika, a human rights attorney who specializes in children's rights and government accountability, conducted research on various access to justice initiatives and created programming around the 30th anniversary of the CRC.

2019-2020 *Human Rights Brief* staff



CENTER, FACULTY, & STAFF PUBLICATIONS



Books, Chapters, Articles, & Reports in 2019-2020

Professor **David Hunter** co-edited, *Advocating Social Change through International Law*, which examines the strategic use of hard and soft international law to promote social change, featuring a chapter by Professor **Claudio Grossman**, “Promoting Social Change through Treaties and Customary International Law: The Experience of the Inter-American Human Rights System.”

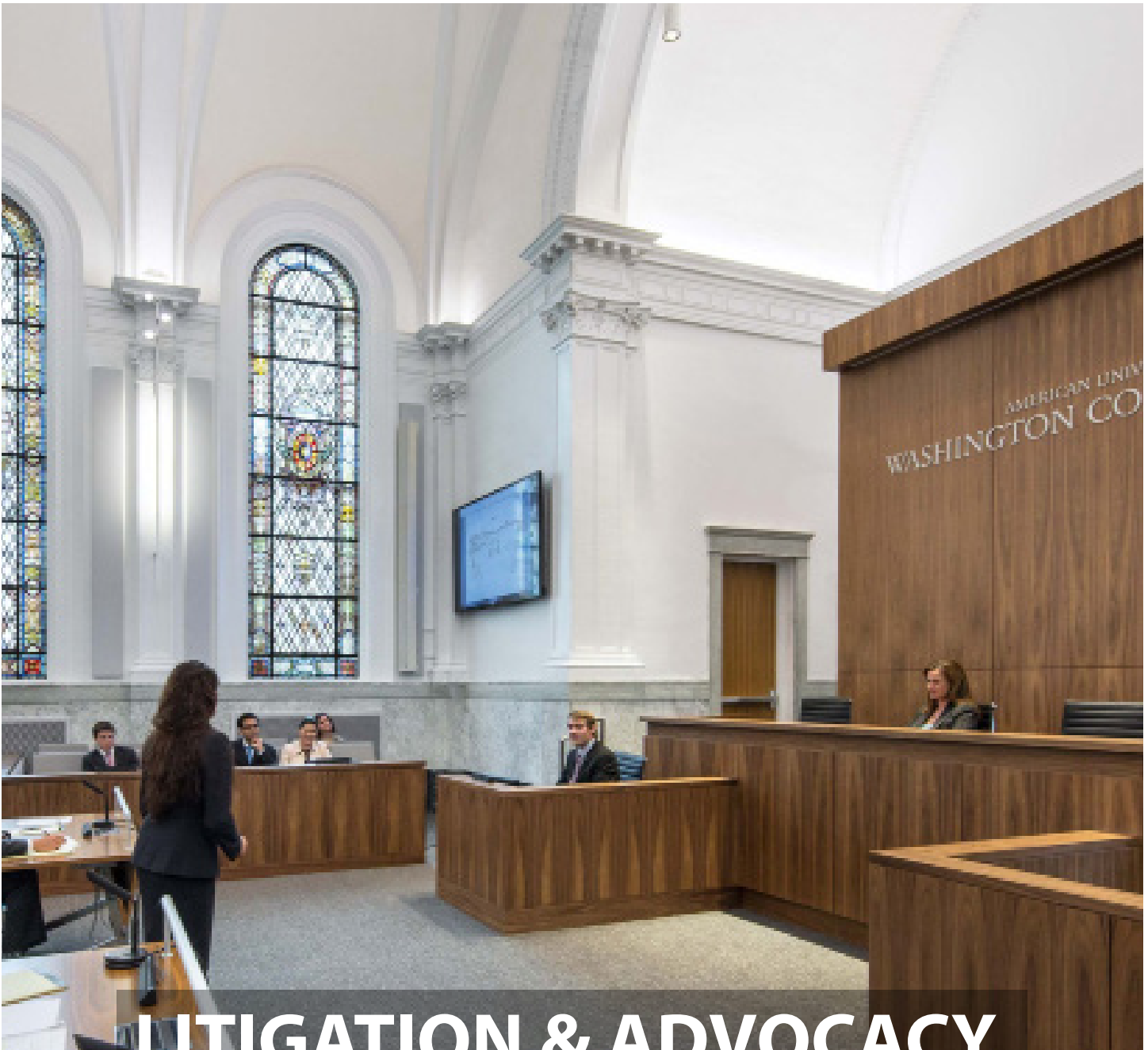
The Southwestern Journal of International Law published Professor **Claudio Grossman’s** keynote address for its 2019 Symposium, “Keynote Address: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ Observer at the AMIA Bombing Trial.”

Professor **Macarena Sáez** published in *El Espectador* on COVID-19 and gender: “Segregación por Género y COVID-19: ¿Ingenuidad o utilitarismo?” She authored a chapter in *Feminist Judgments in Family Law*, “Commentary on *DeShaney v. Winnebago County Department of Social Services*.”

Professor **Juan E. Méndez** published chapters in: *Interrogation and Torture: Integrating Efficacy with Law and Morality* and *Solitary Confinement: Effects, Practices, and Pathways toward Reform*. He authored a TrialWatch Fairness Report on “Monitoring of Mass Trial in Equatorial Guinea.” He also co-authored two articles for *Just Security* on COVID-19 and accountability.

Professor **Diane Orentlicher** published two articles: “Worth the Effort? Assessing the Khmer Rouge Tribunal” in the *Journal for International Criminal Justice* and “Memories of Judgement: Constructing the ICTY’s Legacies” in the *Washington University Global Studies Law Review*.

Program coordinator **Anastassia Fagan** co-authored, “The Realities of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Syria,” a report from AUWCL’s Syrian Initiative to Combat Sexual and Gender-based Violence.



LITIGATION & ADVOCACY

Strengthening the rule of law and providing a foundation for access to justice that helps defend and safeguard human rights around the world

LITIGATION & ADVOCACY

The Center's activities in litigation and advocacy aim to enhance and promote access to justice around the world through strengthening human rights frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels, while empowering marginalized individuals and communities to assert their basic human rights. This focus area supports diverse projects and initiatives on a variety of issue areas in partnership with civil society organizations, academics, and students worldwide.

Projects & Initiatives

The **Anti-Torture Initiative** (ATI) engages in strategic research and advocacy, and supports targeted training and litigation efforts, to fight and prevent torture worldwide. The ATI supports the development of norms, promoting the implementation of reforms and best practices in different jurisdictions, including providing expert testimony and amicus curiae briefs. It also engages in strategic advocacy around thematic issues not traditionally encompassed by the torture and ill-treatment framework, such as abuses in healthcare settings or the treatment of women, LGBTI persons, and gender non-conforming individuals and children.

The ATI was created to expand the reach and practical implementation of the work of the former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Professor Juan E. Méndez. Since 2011, the ATI has implemented activities in dozens of countries, working on the development of a universal protocol on non-coercive interviewing; gender perspectives on torture; implementation of the Istanbul Protocol; and solitary confinement.

Highlights from the past year include:

- The ATI advanced its work on the development of the Protocol on Non-Coercive Interviewing and building support for its endorsement and implementation, undertaken in collaboration with the Association for the Prevention of Torture and the Norwegian Center for Human Rights. The ATI convened a meeting at the UN in New York to update Member States and civil society on the initiative's progress. Steering Committee members also engaged experts in discussion on the draft Protocol at a conference on investigative interviewing in Norway.

- The ATI held multiple capacity building trainings developed in collaboration with the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute on implementation of the Istanbul Protocol. Trainings for lawyers, judges, and medical professionals were held in Ukraine, Mexico, and Brazil.

- The ATI continued its work to combat the use of solitary confinement, including a comparative review of relevant laws and policies from different jurisdictions worldwide. In partnership with the ACLU, the ATI co-hosted the Unlock the Box Campaign's annual convening to identify and assess effective strategies for combating the use of solitary confinement in the U.S.

This summer, the Center concluded its groundbreaking **Project for Transgender Incarcerated Survivors** (PTIS). PTIS strategically merged the provision of direct legal services with best practice in advocacy and coalition building to address the unique vulnerabilities of incarcerated transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) individuals, including increased vulnerability to sexual assault and specialized medical

needs. Launched in 2018 by Whit Washington (JD '17), with support from the Equal Justice Works Foundation, the project focused on efforts to develop and strengthen the processes and mechanisms through which incarcerated TGNC individuals seek legal redress and medical care. PTIS empowered incarcerated transgender individuals by filing grievances against long-standing institutions; monitoring and tracking grievance processes; reporting and prosecuting cases of sexual assault committed during institutionalization; and providing support to clients during the grievance process.

This past fall, PTIS launched a partnership with the Center for Constitutional Rights to develop a training resource for jailhouse lawyers and provided recommendations to Anne Arundel County (Maryland) lawmakers regarding the county's transgender inmate policies. Mx. Washington submitted written testimony to the D.C. City Council opposing the proposed Community Safety and Health Amendment Act, which would have criminalized sex work. In May, Mx. Washington completed their Equal Justice Works Fellowship with the Center and ended their formal affiliation with the project before starting a new position with the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia. Though the project has ended, the Center continues to advance research supporting this work.

The **Syrian Initiative to Combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence** (Initiative) is a collaborative project of Syrian civil society organizations and American University, which aims to reduce stigmatization around SGBV, provide psychosocial support to survivors and their communities, strengthen engagement and collaboration among civil society organizations, improve the quality

of pre-existing SGBV documentation, and enhance justice and accountability efforts within Syria and in neighboring countries. Launched in October 2018 and directed by Deyaa Alrwishdi (LL.M. '17), the Initiative involves key law school faculty and staff from the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law and the Program on International and Comparative Legal Studies.

This fall, Center faculty director Macarena Sáez began working with teams of Syrian lawyers who participate in online strategic litigation training sessions to build capacity on best practices for effective engagement using international human rights law. Center faculty co-directors Diane Orentlicher, Robert Goldman, and Juan E. Méndez also led select sessions of the Initiative's inaugural online International Law course for Syrian advocates. Center program coordinator and Ph.D. candidate Anastassia Fagan co-authored the Initiative's groundbreaking report, "The Realities of SGBV in Syria," which was released in the fall.

Legal Interventions

Every year, the Center engages in numerous litigation and advocacy efforts, lending their expertise to a number of comments, petitions, shadow reports, amicus briefs, urgent actions, among other legal interventions. This year's highlights include:

- *Amicus Curiae to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit*: This fall, the Anti-Torture Initiative submitted an amicus curiae elaborating on the international standards around solitary confinement in the case of Ali Hamza Ahmad Suliman Al Bahlul, a Guantanamo Bay detainee, before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

- *Assessment for the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture: The Impact Litigation Project*, in collaboration with the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, assessed States' implementation of article 14 of the United Nations Convention against Torture. Students researched States' compliance and the effectiveness of reparation mechanisms and legislation, producing summaries and assessments to aid organizations working in anti-torture.

- *Comment to DOJ and DHS: The Anti-Torture Initiative and Impact Litigation Project* submitted a comment in response to proposed changes to U.S. asylum regulations and implementing legislation of the Convention against Torture, arguing that the Dept. of Justice and Dept. of Homeland Security fail to provide evidence supporting the benefits of the proposed rule change and risks non-fulfillment of U.S. treaty obligations.

- *Petitions to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: The Anti-Torture Initiative and Impact Litigation Project* submitted two petitions to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on behalf of two Egyptian citizens who have been arbitrarily detained since 2013. The petitions contend that the conditions of their detainment constitute torture and cruel, degrading, and inhuman treatment, in addition to the denial of their rights to health, family, and freedom of association.

- *Petition to the IACHR: Impact Litigation Project* students mapped a litigation strategy and provided input for a petition submitted to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights on behalf of a same-sex couple against Chile, where they were denied the

ability to list the non-biological mother on their child's birth certificate. The petition raised claims related to the right to family and the right of children born in LGBTQI families to legal equality.

- *Shadow Report to the UN CRC: In collaboration with the Syrian Initiative to Combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Impact Litigation Project* students provided input for a report that raised major issues regarding sexual and gender-based violence and lack of proper education in Syrian refugee camps located in Turkey.

- *Report to the UN OHCHR: Impact Litigation Project* students submitted a report to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights evaluating the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in order to assist in streamlining and navigating the CRPD Committee's jurisprudence.



A Symposium Celebrating the Contributions of Herman Schwartz to the Rule of Law

On Friday, September 27, AUWCL Professor Emeritus and founding Center faculty co-director Herman Schwartz was recognized for his world-renowned legal legacy during “A Global Lawyer: A Symposium Celebrating the Contributions of Herman Schwartz to the Rule of Law.” The symposium was organized by the Center and the Program on Law and Government. The day-long symposium was followed by a private dinner honoring Professor Schwartz, featuring U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. In her remarks, Justice Ginsburg recalled many of the ways Professor Schwartz’s distinguished career has focused attention on human rights, civil liberties, and the rule of the law (pictured below). During the dinner, Emeritus Professor and Congressman Jamie Raskin (D-MD) presented Professor Schwartz with a congressional citation of merit (pictured right).



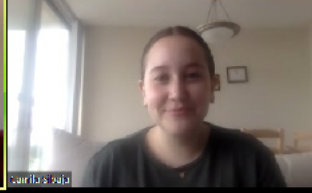
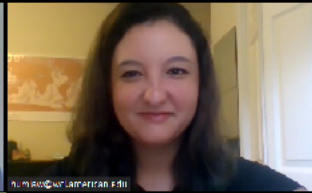
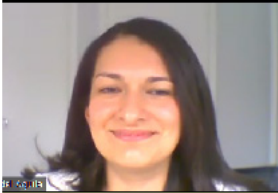
The symposium covered a myriad of issues Schwartz has woven into decades of his legal work, including panels on voting rights, comparative constitutionalism, human rights in Israel, and prison reform. Many of the panelists—scholars, activists, and AUWCL faculty—underscored how Schwartz has helped shape these respective areas of law.

Herman was foremost among law teachers who appreciate the value of a comparative study of constitutional law. He contributed importantly to the framing of post-World War II constitutions abroad, and he was particularly hopeful about promoting human rights for all who dwell in the land of Israel.

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court



Our Team in Action



Highlights from the Center's Team

Our faculty and staff include scholars, practitioners, and activists with combined decades of experience in human rights and international humanitarian law. The below highlights represent a snapshot of diverse activities, scholarship, service, and learning our team has advanced and undertaken this year.



Professor & Faculty Director, Macarena Sáez

This fall, Professor Macarena Sáez delivered the keynote address at the First Regional Congress of Legal Clinics in Peru, was an expert panelist at a conference on strategic litigation and LGBT rights in Colombia, lectured on Family Law and Human Rights at the Universidad de Concepción in Chile, and led human rights trainings for public defenders across Chile. This spring, she participated in online events addressing the human rights implications of COVID-19 and was featured in the May edition of *Washington Lawyer* magazine for her work in international human rights. She was appointed to the General Assembly of Colombian-based research center DeJusticia and to the Board of Directors of DC-based think tank WOLA.



Melissa del Aguila, Associate Director

This fall, associate director Melissa del Aguila joined the University and College Consortium for Human Rights Education, a group that seeks to further human rights education, research, and learning across university and college communities. This summer, she accepted an appointment to serve on the programming committee for the 2021 American Society of International Law Annual Meeting, focusing on programs within the International Human Rights, Humanitarian Law, and Criminal Justice track.



Anastassia Fagan, Program Coordinator

Program coordinator Anastassia Fagan, a doctoral candidate in AU's department of anthropology, developed a pilot initiative for students interested in human rights, national security, and IHL, while also participating in the ongoing 9/11 hearings at Guantanamo Bay as an NGO observer. Additionally, she continued to serve as an alumni mentor for AU's Peace Corps Prep Program and the University of Notre Dame's mentorship program for minority, first generation, and other under-represented students.



Vanessa Drummond, Assistant Project Director of Anti-Torture Initiative

ATI assistant project director Vanessa Drummond represented the ATI during sessions of the Steering Committee for the Protocol on Investigative Interviewing in Bangkok, Thailand. Ms. Drummond co-authored an article on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin American prisons for *La Silla Vacía*. She also provided critical drafting and editing support for a chapter in the edited volume, *Responding to Torture: Latin American Perspectives on a Global Challenge*, released by IBA's Human Rights Institute.



Katherine Holcombe, Assistant Director of Kovler Project & Impact Litigation

This spring, Impact Litigation and Kovler Project Against Torture assistant director Katherine Holcombe assisted Dean Emeritus Claudio Grossman in his capacity as a member of the Institut de Droit International's new commission on Pandemics and International Law by drafting commentaries. Ms. Holcombe also supported the agenda of the International Law Commission by drafting and editing commentaries and assisting with proposal development for the ILC's long-term thematic priority areas.



Maria Julia Dellasoppa, Visiting Scholar & Lead Researcher for Election Monitoring

As an international visiting scholar, Maria Julia Dellasoppa collaborates with the University of Buenos Aires on joint research related to climate change and human rights. Last fall, Ms. Dellasoppa authored an article for *Westlaw Journal Environmental*, commenting on IACHR jurisprudence and environmental rights. Additionally, she and Professor Sáez submitted an amicus curiae before a Peruvian court in support of a child unable to have the names of his two mothers on his civil registration.

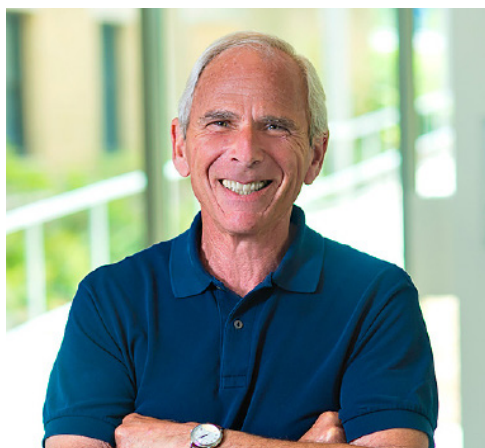


Camila Sibaja, Program Assistant & Coordinator for Election Monitoring

Camila Sibaja joined the Center this year as a program assistant and coordinator for the Initiative on Transparency and Election Monitoring. Ms. Sibaja is currently pursuing her master's in International Development at AU's renowned School of International Service, with a focus on international crime and violence prevention. She has extensive international development experience, most recently working with youth to prevent gang-related violence in Honduras with Creative Associates International.

Highlights from the Center's Faculty Co-Directors

The Center's faculty co-directors engage in cutting-edge research, create scholarship, organize events, develop trainings, and implement a host of projects focused on cultivating the next generation of human rights advocates and improving the rights of vulnerable and marginalized populations around the world.



Professor Robert Goldman

This fall, Professor Robert Goldman oversaw the release of a report by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) analyzing the initial implementation of Colombia's historic accountability and justice mechanism—the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. This spring, he was on a semester sabbatical leave from AUWCL. During this time, he continued to serve as President of the ICJ, which has been at the forefront of publishing articles, op-eds, legal blogs, and reports concerning human rights in the time of COVID-19. This summer, he delivered introductory remarks at an online conference, hosted by the ICJ and the Human Rights Joint Platform (IHOP), assessing the state of access to justice in Turkey.



Professor of Law & Dean Emeritus, Claudio Grossman

ASIL awarded Professor Claudio Grossman the prestigious 2020 Goler T. Butcher Medal. This fall, he convened panels about the crises in Chile and Venezuela, presented on climate change at the 74th UN General Assembly, and opened the 27th annual course on human rights by the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, where he serves as President. He was elected associate member of the IDI, where he serves on a commission on Pandemics and International Law. Since March, he has spearheaded dozens of virtual events to address the human rights implications of COVID-19. Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* featured an article about his life as a refugee and champion for human rights.



Professor David Hunter

This fall, Professor David Hunter contributed to the Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, which was presented at the 43rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in December. He organized a series of events commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Accountability Counsel, where he serves on the Board of Directors. This spring, he co-authored an amicus brief citing comparative law cases that have linked climate change and human right in *Juliana v. United States*, a Ninth Circuit case that is testing whether climate change impacts violate the constitutional rights of children.



Professor Juan E. Méndez

This fall, Professor Juan E. Méndez contributed to a historic verdict as an expert witness in *Reddock v. Canada*, challenging federal rules on solitary confinement and participated in a congressional staff briefing on legislation to develop national standards for the use of solitary confinement in correctional facilities. This spring, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights cited his expert opinion in a landmark judgment, *Caso Azul Rojas Marín vs. Perú*, which enhances protections for LGBTI persons against torture. This summer, he participated in numerous webinars to address issues around police violence and accountability, and the impact of COVID-19 on human rights and civil liberties.



Professor Diane Orentlicher

AUWCL presented Professor Diane Orentlicher with the 2020 Pauline R. Moore Scholar Award in recognition of her outstanding scholarship in the area of public law for her book, *Some Kind of Justice: The ICTY's Impact in Bosnia and Serbia*. This year, she testified about war reparations before the congressional Helsinki Commission. She presented remarks on transitional justice to the World Bank's thematic working group on fragility, conflict and violence, and moderated an ASIL panel on accountability for international crimes. In June, she was interviewed on NPR regarding the Trump Administration's sanctions against International Criminal Court officials.



Professor & Dir. of International Human Rights Law Clinic, Anita Sinha

Professor Anita Sinha oversaw the development of a groundbreaking report, "The Colombian Paradox: Human rights report on the Afro-descendant LGBTI community in Colombia," which was presented at a thematic hearing before the IACHR in November. In March, she traveled to Honduras with clinic students to conduct field research about the impacts of the Trump Administration's family separation policy. This summer, she co-signed a submission to the Commission on Unalienable Rights, was a trainer for the Movement Law Lab's course on movement lawyering, and served on a panel of faculty experts addressing migration law and policy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The faculty at WCL are some of the most humble and inspiring practitioners and advocates in the field of human rights. Their passion for their work is contagious and their lessons, which derive from practical experience, have readied me to pursue a career in human rights.

- Madison Bingle (JD'22)

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Professor of Law &
Louis C. James Scholar

Juan E. Méndez

Professor of Human Rights Law
in Residence

Claudio Grossman

Professor of Law & Dear Emeritus
R. Geraldson Scholar for Int'l
and Humanitarian Law

Diane Orentlicher

Professor of International Law

David Hunter

Professor of Law

Anita Sinha

Associate Professor of Law & Director
of the International Human Rights
Law Clinic

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