

HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVOCATES PROGRAM
2023–24



35

Years
HRAP

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HRAP is on YouTube!



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INTRODUCTION

2024 marked the 35th anniversary of the Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) at Columbia University.

Founded in 1989, HRAP leverages the resources of Columbia University and those offered by NYC as a hub of NGOs and international organizations to provide human rights advocates like Jamuna Tamang with academic, skill-building, mentoring and networking opportunities. Through seminars, participation in University courses, and workshops led by staff from leading human rights organizations as well as meetings with policy makers and funders, advocates share their experiences, reflect critically on their work, and plan future advocacy campaigns.

365 advocates from 100 countries have participated in HRAP since 1989. The cumulative reach of HRAP alumni is extraordinary: alumni have worked with organizations whose memberships range from the thousands to the millions. They can be found at grassroots human rights organizations, serving in their national governments, with intergovernmental bodies and at the UN, and teaching at universities around the globe.

The 2023-24 cohort of nine advocates began the program online in October 2023 with workshops including fundraising and research, writing and documentation. In residence at Columbia University from January to May 2024, the advocates attended graduate-level courses, networked with the human rights community in NYC and Washington, D.C., participated in skill-based workshops, and shared their work with audiences at Columbia and beyond.



The 2023-24 HRAP cohort will always be remembered for their camaraderie.

“ Growing up, I witnessed firsthand discrimination faced by indigenous communities, particularly women with disabilities—a group to which I belong. This awareness fueled my belief that everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or ability, deserves respect and equal rights.”

2023-24 ADVOCATE JAMUNA TAMANG OF NEPAL

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THE ADVOCATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS



**AMIR
MUKAMBETOV**

ADVOCACY COORDINATOR
*Eurasian Coalition for Health,
Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity*

CHAIR OF THE BOARD
Kyrgyz Indigo

KYRGYZSTAN



Reflecting on the journey that led me to become a human rights advocate, championing the rights of those who find themselves vulnerable, a story from my childhood springs to mind. Growing up as an effeminate boy in a remote village, I often found myself the target of bullying from my peers at school. I vividly recall the daily ordeal of having to take a longer, safer route to avoid the crowds of boys who made my journey to school a torment. The specter of homophobia and peer cruelty not only cast a shadow over my everyday life but also posed a significant barrier to my education. Over time, I learned to navigate life by choosing the safer, albeit longer, path.

Numerous individuals follow a winding route to ensure their safety, allowing bullies to evade accountability for their actions. Yet, it takes immense courage to defy one's insecurities, break free from the established patterns, and forge a path towards societal change. I yearned to break this cycle of violence and challenge the prevailing norms. I wanted not only to pave a better way forward but also to inspire others to do the same.

My journey to activism for human rights and the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community in Kyrgyzstan, a society deeply hostile to anything non-heterosexual, empowered me greatly. Joining forces with like-minded individuals, I became part of Kyrgyz Indigo, a grassroots organization that we transformed into one of the country's largest and most influential queer rights groups. In addition to my daily responsibilities at Kyrgyz Indigo, I participated in various expert groups advocating for queer rights. One notable example was our successful campaign against the

"Anti-Gay Propaganda Bill" proposed by the Kyrgyz Parliament in 2014. Through concerted efforts and months of advocacy, we persuaded the government to deem the bill ineffective and incomplete, sparing queer individuals from significant limitations on their rights. I believe victories like this are evidence that even small and fragile communities can influence the socio-political aspects of a country.

My decade-long tenure at Kyrgyz Indigo has seen me engage in diverse activities, from community capacity building to advocacy and health promotion, not only within Kyrgyzstan but across Central Asia. I have had the privilege of mentoring numerous queer activists, many of whom have risen to become leaders in their own right. Today, as Chair of the Board of Kyrgyz Indigo and co-founder of the LGBTIQ+ Platform in Kyrgyzstan, I continue to steer the organization toward championing queer-friendly legislation and opposing discriminatory bills.

Recently, I have been active in efforts to counter a proposed law targeting "foreign agents," which could have severe implications for the rights of activists.

Participating in the Human Rights Advocates Program has been a rewarding opportunity to deepen my understanding of human rights and gender justice paradigms. It not only facilitates my personal growth but also enables me to share my expertise with fellow advocates. I remain committed to advancing the cause of equality for all, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or sex characteristics.

“The specter of homophobia and peer cruelty not only cast a shadow over my everyday life but also posed a significant barrier to my education. Over time, I learned to navigate life by choosing the safer, albeit longer, path.”

FACULTY MENTOR

Widney Brown
Professor
BARNARD COLLEGE

CLASSES

Affect and Activism
Gender Justice

NETWORKING

New York
Arcus Foundation
Astraea Foundation
Ford Foundation
Global Humanitarian Policy, Advocacy and Diplomacy
Global Philanthropy Project
Human Rights Watch
International Center for Research on Women
Open Society Foundation
OutRight International
Philanthropy Massachusetts
SAGE—Advocacy & Services for LGBTQ+ Elders
Scholars at Risk
StoryCorps
The Philanthropic Initiative's Center for Global Philanthropy
WITNESS

NETWORKING

Washington, Washington, D.C.
Amnesty International USA
Free the Slaves
Human Rights Campaign
National Endowment for Democracy
Robert. F. Kennedy Human Rights Foundation
U.S. Department of State

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Discussion on Countering Anti-LGBTIQ+ Legislation in Two Countries—Kyrgyzstan and Kenya, The Harriman Institute and LGBTQ and Allies at SIPA, Columbia University

How to Use Social Media for Advocacy and Campaigns, Social Media and Human Rights class with Professor Ted Perlmutter, ISHR

(De)humanizing Education in Formal Education and Beyond, Teaching and Curriculum in International Contexts class with Professor Daniela Romero Amaya, Teachers College



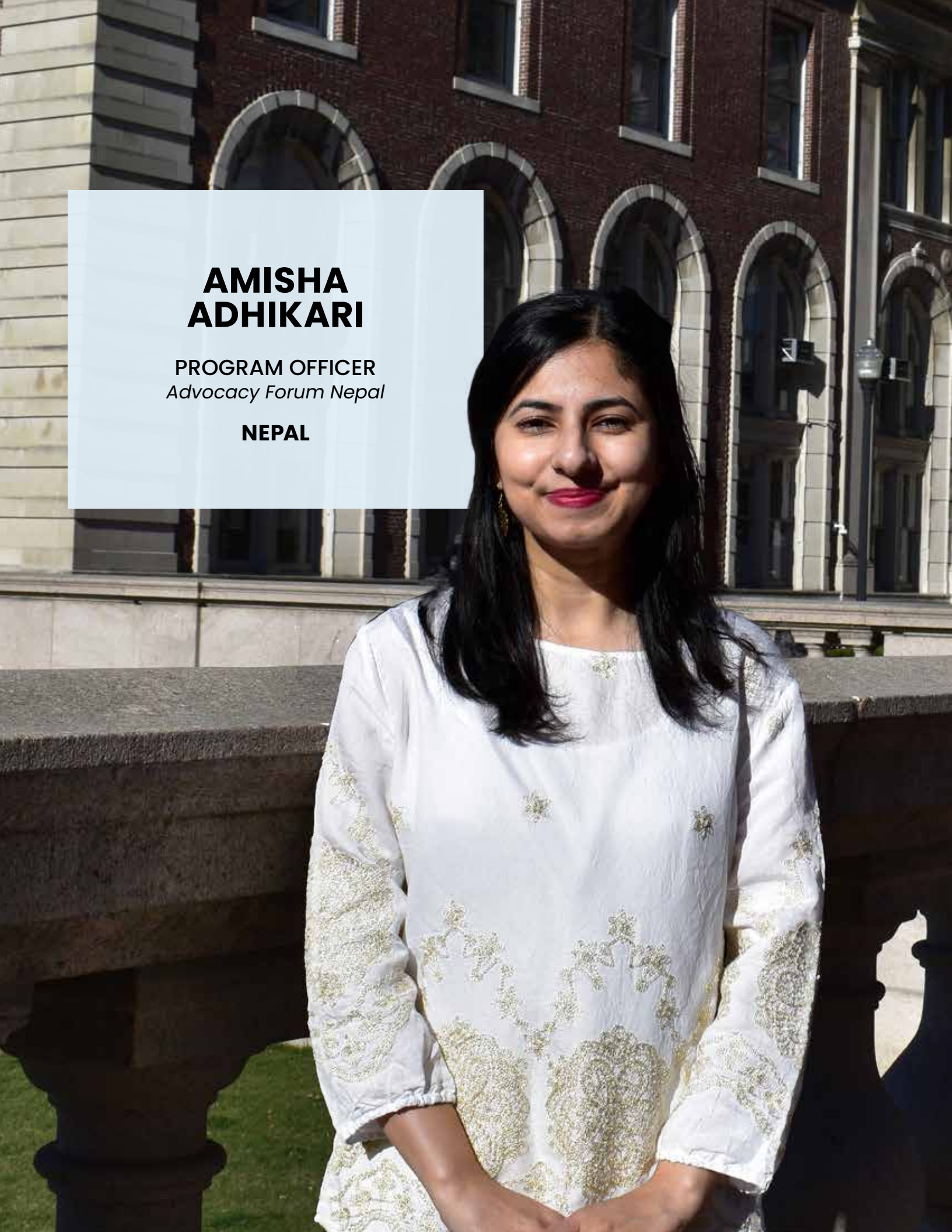
The advocates had numerous speaking engagements on campus.



Kyle Knight (center) and Michael Bochenek of Human Rights Watch led the advocates through a six-session workshop on Research, Writing and Documentation.



Amir poses with his HRAP certificate on the Morningside campus.



AMISHA ADHIKARI

PROGRAM OFFICER
Advocacy Forum Nepal

NEPAL

THE ADVOCATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

In exploring why I am a human rights advocate, I found that my upbringing in a Nepali Hindu community is a central foundation. From a young age, I confronted deep-rooted social, structural, and patriarchal barriers that limited my access to opportunities and stifled my potential. These experiences—which ranged from restrictions on my freedom of movement to being silenced and denied leadership roles due to my gender—instilled in me the yearning to understand and practice equality, equity, and justice.

My formative years were marked by the turmoil resulting from Nepal's internal armed conflict between 1996 and 2006, which exposed me to the atrocities committed against civilians. The traumatic experiences of witnessing armed soldiers storming into civilians' homes, including mine, and the relentless reports of landmines/explosives exploding, killings, conflict-related sexual violence, and enforced disappearances fueled my determination to fight for the rights of those affected by the conflict.

I was fortunate enough to have an unconventional mother and father who encouraged me to challenge discrimination and injustice. Their support gave me the confidence to voice my opinions boldly and paved the way for my journey into human rights advocacy. However, even as I pursued a career in law to champion these principles further, the profession that I chose as a lawyer again subjected me to the patriarchy. As a young female lawyer, society often considered me less capable than men. Unlike our

male counterparts, I, as a woman, have to prove my competence every day. My journey as a human rights advocate has made me acknowledge my privilege as an educated, middle-class woman. Still, at the same time, I am acutely aware of the intersectionality of discrimination in my country. This awareness has further motivated me to support marginalized communities and the victims of internal armed conflict to the best of my ability, regardless of the challenges I experience personally and professionally.

My advocacy extends beyond the confines of the courtroom, encompassing a broader commitment to addressing the injustices endured by victims of human rights violations, conflict victims, women, marginalized groups, and those with conflict-related disabilities. Given the sensitive and challenging landscape shaped by the influence of former warring parties in Nepal's current politics and the State's continuous neglect of the transitional justice process, I remain steadfast in my dedication to seeking justice for those who have suffered.

Ultimately, the faith and confidence that victims place in me keep me going in my work. Witnessing their resilience in the face of ongoing injustices reaffirms my commitment to advocating for their rights and giving their voices more weight. My path as a human rights advocate stems from an earnest and unshakeable desire to combat discrimination, promote justice, and empower the marginalized in my community.

“ The traumatic experiences of witnessing armed soldiers storming into civilians' homes, including mine, and the relentless reports of landmines/explosives exploding, killings, conflict-related sexual violence, and enforced disappearances fueled my determination to fight for the rights of those affected by the conflict. ”

FACULTY MENTOR

Prem Phyak
Associate Professor,
International and
Comparative Education
TEACHERS COLLEGE

CLASSES

Serious Play: Oral History and
the Art of Story
Sexual and Reproductive Health in
Humanitarian Settings

NETWORKING

NYC
Adhikaar—for Human Rights
and Social Justice
Ford Foundation
Global Network of Women
Peacebuilders
Human Rights Watch
International Center for Research
on Women
Permanent Mission of Nepal
to the United Nations
Plan International
UN Commission on the Status
of Women
UN Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues



Esther, Amisha, Andrea and Amir spoke to students at Teachers College.

NETWORKING

Washington, D.C.
American Bar Association
Amnesty International USA
Center for Victims of Torture
Free the Slaves
National Endowment
For Democracy
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
U.S. Department of State



The Advocates attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

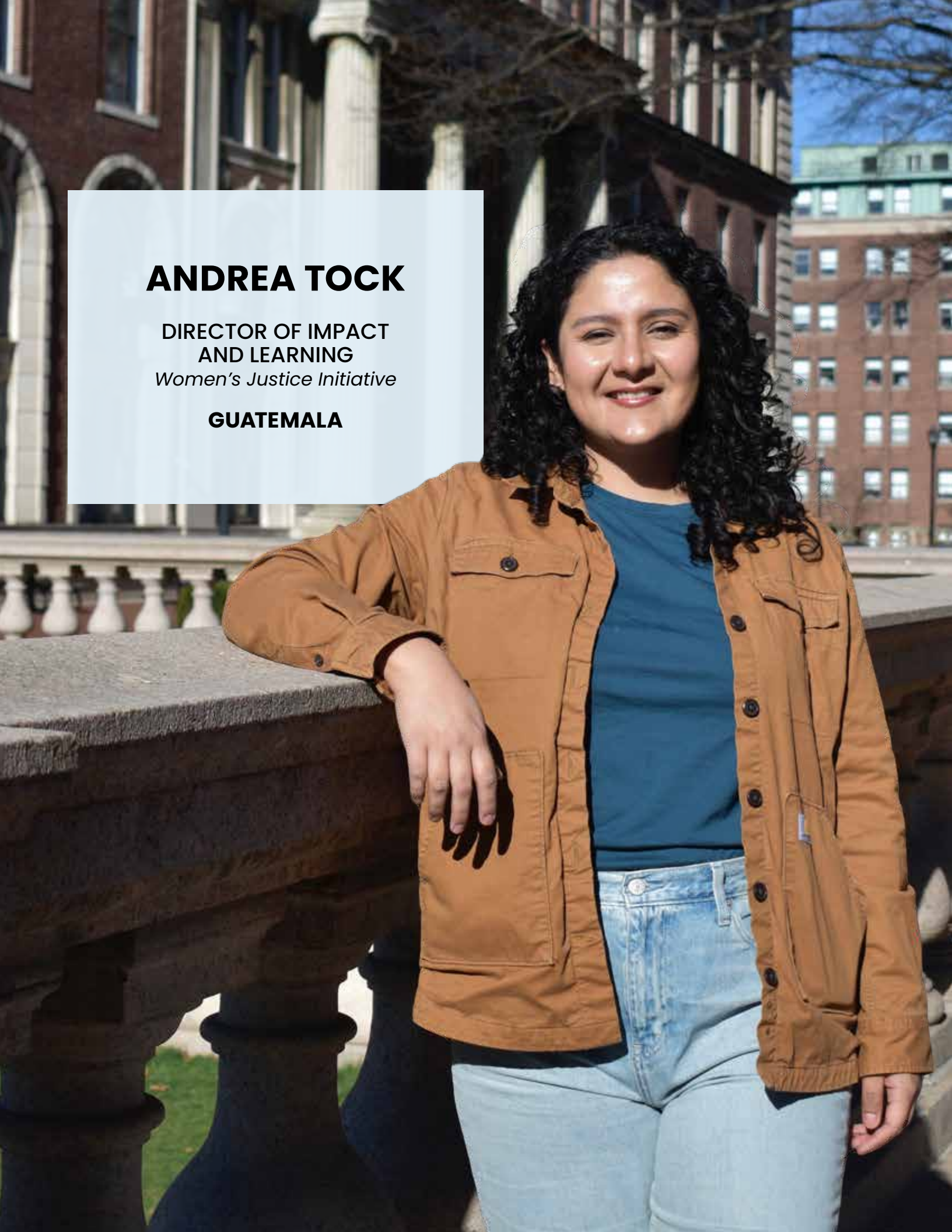
Advocating for Human Rights and
Corporate Responsibility in the Legal
Sphere, Columbia Pre-Law Society,
Columbia University
International Human Rights Law Panel,
Columbia University Women in Law
and Politics
(De)humanizing Education in Formal
Education and Beyond, Teaching and
Curriculum in International Contexts
class with Professor Daniela Romero
Amaya, Teachers College



Amisha and David visited The Center for Victims of Torture during the networking trip to Washington, D.C.



Daniela Amaya-Romero of Teachers College (Lower left) and Sara E. Casey of the Mailman School of Public Health (upper right) mentored advocates in the 2023-24 cohort.



ANDREA TOCK

DIRECTOR OF IMPACT
AND LEARNING

Women's Justice Initiative

GUATEMALA

THE ADVOCATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

I think that no one person exists on their own but in relation to others to whom we have a moral responsibility. This understanding is what has guided my path as a human rights advocate and a feminist activist.

During my childhood, Guatemala was coming out of 36 years of internal conflict that caused thousands of deaths, especially among the indigenous population, and instilled a sense of fear and insecurity in our society. I was not allowed to play on the streets with other kids, and, as I grew older, I realized that public spaces were not safe for women. I knew that this needed to change.

While studying political science as an undergraduate, I had the opportunity to engage with numerous human rights activists dedicated to transitional justice. My passion for women's and indigenous peoples' rights was ignited within these activists' circles. Through the lens of my lived experience, I could recognize how women, gender expansive and sexually diverse people were often treated as second-class citizens with limited formal rights. I understood that these barriers increased when other oppressive systems, such as racism, intersected.

As an active member of the Feminist Assembly, I contribute to a collaborative platform where feminist activists from diverse backgrounds come together for reflection and political co-creation. Additionally, I serve on the editorial board of *La Cuerda*, a prominent feminist print magazine. During my master's studies in Sweden, supported by a scholarship from the Swedish government, I was part of a student organization that arranged several student-led activities about diversity in the classroom, safe spaces, and feminist pedagogies.

I am currently the Director of Impact and Learning for the Women's Justice Initiative (WJI), a community-based organization in the indigenous Maya

Kaqchikel region of Guatemala. WJI offers culturally grounded, bilingual legal aid, rights education, and leadership training across 85 rural communities. Our programs—Women's Rights Education, Legal Services, Community Advocates, and Adolescent Girls—empower women to identify and pursue legal avenues, particularly in cases of gender-based violence and securing economic rights such as land titling and inheritance. WJI's holistic approach strengthens local institutions and enhances the justice system's response to gender-based violence and child marriage.

Most of my advocacy work has been carried out in Guatemala, as this is where I live and feel a strong sense of responsibility. However, I believe that a human rights advocate's duty transcends borders by advocating for justice and equality for all individuals worldwide. Through my participation in HRAP, I've gained insights, resources, and connections that have enhanced my ability to keep fighting for the rights of women and girls. Given the emotional intensity of working on human rights issues, collaborating with like-minded individuals from diverse backgrounds has provided me with vital support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging to a global community dedicated to advancing human rights.

In the near future, I would like to create better ways to share the knowledge I have acquired through my work and life experiences with other organizations doing valuable work in Guatemala. I hope also to have an impact on the way funding is allocated to international development. Although this is a big challenge, when human rights advocates and community-based organizations join and jointly advocate, more flexible and trust-based funding can be provided to organizations and communities that are truly building a more just and equitable world.

“ I think that no one person exists on their own but in relation to others to whom we have a moral responsibility. This understanding is what has guided my path as a human rights advocate and a feminist activist. ”

FACULTY MENTOR

Daniela Romero Amaya
Lecturer, International and Comparative Education
TEACHERS COLLEGE

CLASSES

Affect and Activism
Indigenous Oral Traditions and Anti-Colonial Oral Histories

NETWORKING

NYC
Bernstein Institute for Human Rights, NYU Law
Ford Foundation
Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
Human Rights Watch
International Center for Research on Women
Open Society Foundations
Philanthropy Massachusetts
Plan International
StoryCorps
The Philanthropic Initiative's Center for Global Philanthropy
UN Commission on the Status of Women
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women
UN Women
Wellspring Philanthropic Foundation
WomenStrong International

NETWORKING

Washington, D.C.
Amnesty International USA
Free the Slaves
Guatemalan Embassy
Indian Law Resource Center
Latin America Working Group
National Endowment for Democracy
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Washington Office for Latin America
U.S Department of State

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Advocating for Indigenous Women's Rights, Institute for the Study of Human Rights and the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, Columbia University
Feminists Grassroots Justice, CSW68 parallel event, Ford Foundation
Improving Access to Justice for Indigenous Women's Rights in Guatemala, Teachers College
The Native American Council in Conversation with HRAP, Native American Council, Columbia University
International Human Rights Law Panel, Columbia University Women in Law and Politics
(De)humanizing Education in Formal Education and Beyond, Teaching and Curriculum in International Contexts class with Professor Daniela Romero Amaya, Teachers College



The Native American Council at Columbia welcomed Andrea and Jamuna at a speaking engagement.



Andrea and the advocates attended side events and spoke on panels during the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

DAVID SAMUEL MEJÍA CRUZ

LEGAL COORDINATOR
*Documenta, Análisis y Acción
para la Justicia Social*

MÉXICO



I was born in Tamasopo, San Luis Potosí, México, at the town clinic, which is right in front of the “Cascadas de Tamasopo,” a local natural water park and literal paradise. I was 15 when the country’s drug war was launched, and the military took to the streets to “restore law and order.” I was in college when México went from an inquisitorial to an adversarial justice system. This is the context during which I joined Documenta, whose pledge to defend the right to access justice stands at the intersection of incarceration, disability, and mental health. For more than 13 years, Documenta has been at the forefront of providing legal support for individuals and their families who face human rights abuses while navigating the justice system. I am happy to be part of the journey, which has led me to call myself a human rights defender and an advocate for justice through and beyond the law.

What does it mean to be an advocate for justice through and beyond the law? It means that for human rights to work, we must use the recourses the law provides to make true on those promises we made to ourselves: promises of equality, freedom, and peace. It means recognizing the law’s inherent utility in solving social problems while also acknowledging its limitations. It means questioning punitive policies and seeking solutions with the communities most affected by them. This approach has allowed me to represent human rights abuse cases at both the national and international levels: from an incarcerated survivor of torture in need of a surgical procedure to a person with disabilities incarcerated without a sentence for over 15 years to the repeal of laws that contravene basic human rights. I want to be there when we build a better justice system.

Those of us who had the privilege to study law have a responsibility to those most affected by it. I hope to accompany their struggles and search for justice. I know I am not alone in this, neither in spirit nor action. Only through solidarity will the criminalization of people and communities come to an end. To be an advocate for justice is to be an advocate for peace and human rights. Only then will we be able to enjoy this paradise we call home again.



“ I want to be there when we build a better justice system. ”

FACULTY MENTOR

Pablo Piccato
Professor
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

CLASSES

Law and Violence:
Critical Perspectives
Exclusion, Gender and
Mano Dura Policies

NETWORKING

NYC
Arcus Foundation
Bernstein Institute for
Human Rights, NYU Law
Center For Economic and
Social Rights
Ford Foundation
Human Rights Watch
Open Society Foundations
Philanthropy Massachusetts
Scholars At Risk
StoryCorps
The Philanthropic Initiative's
Center for Global Philanthropy
Wellspring Philanthropic Foundation
WITNESS

NETWORKING

Washington, D.C.
American Bar Association
Amnesty International USA
Center for Victims of Torture
Free The Slaves
National Endowment for Democracy
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Washington Office on Latin America
U.S. Department of State

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Cause Lawyering: U.S. Civil And Human
Rights Attorneys, Institute for Jewish
Studies, Columbia University
Advocating for Human Rights and
Corporate Responsibility in the Legal
Sphere, Columbia Pre-Law Society,
Columbia University



The Advocates sampled a wide variety of cuisines while in NYC.



The Advocates found a home away from home at International House.



Amisha, David and Jamuna met with staff from the International Center for Transitional Justice.



The lawyers in the cohort visited the American Bar Association during the trip to Washington, D.C.

A portrait of Esther Kimani, a Black woman with short dark hair, wearing a black top with colorful geometric patterns on the sleeves and a matching patterned skirt. She is standing outdoors in front of a stone building with columns and trees. A light blue text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

ESTHER KIMANI

FOUNDER AND
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Zamora Foundation

KENYA

My decision to become a human rights champion was not a spontaneous epiphany but a gradual awakening sparked by a series of injustices in my community. Growing up, I was always aware of the discrepancies that existed, but it wasn't until I witnessed the consequences of these injustices, inequalities, and oppression that I felt motivated to act. My journey began in a neighborhood where poverty was prevalent, girls were married off early and as children, women had children every year without a break, girls were not allowed to go back to school after pregnancy, and opportunities appeared to be reserved for a select few. So this meant that becoming a human rights advocate from a feminist perspective meant more than just fighting for my rights and the rights of my community; it meant standing in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed. It meant recognizing each individual's intrinsic worth and dignity, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other identity. It meant creating a more inclusive and equal world where everyone might live without discrimination or violence.

I remember witnessing inequalities where talented people, especially women, were repressed by circumstances beyond their control, their potential unrealized owing to societal mechanisms that marginalized them. I witnessed a pervasive culture of sexism and misogyny that normalized violence against women and reinforced damaging stereotypes. As a feminist leader, I couldn't overlook the systematic oppression and prejudice that women, girls, and marginalized persons suffer daily. These experiences fueled my desire to advocate and support gender justice and human rights for all.

As I learned more about feminist theory and practice, I realized that the fight for gender equity and equality was inextricably linked to the larger struggle for human rights. I immersed myself in studying human rights legislation, where I learned about the universally shared values of respect, fairness, and equality. I committed my time and energy to local groups, where I pushed for changes to policies and rallied behind underrepresented groups in their pursuit of equality. Protests were on my calendar, and I did my best to bring attention to the problems by participating in social media campaigns and having difficult conversations with loved ones who didn't understand. Feminism taught me to recognize the interconnection of many forms of oppression, whether based on gender, race, class, sexual orientation, or other intersecting forms of discrimination and identity. I realized that to advocate for gender equality and equity, I needed to address reproductive injustice, climate injustice, economic injustice, LGBTQ+ rights, and more. Being a feminist human rights advocate entailed confronting patriarchal power structures and working to dismantle the mechanisms that perpetuated discrimination, oppression, inequalities, and violence against women and girls in all their diversities. It meant pushing for reproductive rights, equal access to education and healthcare, economic empowerment, and an end to all types of gender-based violence and discrimination.

My journey has been shaped by the stories of perseverance and resistance of women and girls in all their diversities who bravely share their lived realities on violence against women and girls, sexual assault, and unsafe abortion complications who refuse to be

“ I realized that to advocate for gender equality and equity, I needed to address reproductive injustice, climate injustice, economic injustice, LGBTQ+ rights, and more. ”

silenced or subjugated. Stories of adolescent girls and young women who use their voices to share their narratives and experiences of inequalities and oppression, who are deeply conscious of their right to choose, and who have the resolve to influence change right from their household to community, national, regional, and global levels. I have

continuously stood in solidarity with LGBTQ+ people who have endured persecution and violence simply for being themselves. I have also raised the voices of women, adolescent girls, young women, young female sex workers, and other marginalized groups whose battles were frequently ignored or erased. I am so happy to be a feminist human rights advocate.

FACULTY MENTOR

Sara Casey
Assistant Professor
of Population
and Family Health
MAILMAN SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC HEALTH

CLASSES

Climate Justice
Sexual and Reproductive Health
in a Humanitarian Setting
Social Media and Human Rights

NETWORKING

New York
Arcus Foundation
Center for Economic and
Social Rights
Ford Foundation
Global Philanthropy Project
Human Rights Watch
International Center for
Research on Women
Open Society Foundations
Scholars at Risk
StoryCorps
UN Commission on the
Status of Women
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

NETWORKING

Washington, D.C.
Amnesty International–USA
Free the Slaves
Human Rights Campaign
National Endowment for Democracy
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
U.S. Department of State
United States Agency for
International Development

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Leaking through the Cracks:
Unprotected by the Social Systems,
a side event organized by the
African Women’s Development and
Communications Network and the
Center For Egyptian Women’s Legal
Assistance, UN Commission on the
Status of Women
How to Use Social Media for Advocacy
and Campaigns, Social Media and
Human Rights class with Professor Ted
Perlmutter, ISHR
(De)humanizing Education in Formal
Education and Beyond, Teaching and
Curriculum in International Contexts
class with Professor Daniela Romero
Amaya, Teachers College
Listening & Learning with Human Rights
Advocates, George Clement Bond
Center for African Education,
Teachers College
Political Roundtable: The Status of
Human Rights in Africa, African Students
Association, Columbia University



Teachers College organized several events for the advocates.



The advocates engaged with leaders of human rights organizations including Bukeni Waruzi, the Executive Director of Free the Slaves, during their networking trip to Washington, D.C.



The advocates raised awareness about their work at a number of speaking engagements at Columbia.

IMANI KANARIO KIMIRI

HEAD OF LEGAL AFFAIRS
*National Gay and Lesbian
Human Rights Commission*

KENYA



It was during adolescence, around the age of 10 or 11, that I realized my attraction to individuals assigned female at birth. At that time, I was at a staunchly Christian boarding school that exposed me to the harsh reality of public floggings for same-sex conduct, leaving me bewildered by the harsh punishment meted out to those who shared my inclinations. Fearing for my safety, I vowed to conceal my orientation, haunted by feelings of guilt for simply being myself. This experience fueled my determination to study law and advocate for change, ensuring that LGBTIQ+ children are spared the callousness of societal judgment. I was introduced to the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) in 2012 when the idea of an institution that advocates and advances the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons in Kenya was imagined. I had the privilege of interacting with the founders of NGLHRC, who imagined a utopia where LGBTIQ+ persons would have access to justice for violence that was orchestrated against them based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or sex characteristics while challenging the State to enact laws and policies that are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ persons rights and issues and repeal laws that were derogatory to the existence of queer and trans people in Kenya.

In my early adulthood, I endured gender-based violence in a forced marriage. Despite reporting the abuse to the authorities multiple times, it was dismissed as a mere “domestic issue.” Even when I finally summoned the courage to leave, I faced further harassment and assault, embarrassment, and shame for not being successful in a heterosexual relationship. How could I not? Knowing that people assigned females at birth are conditioned to have successful marriages and submit to their husbands, regardless of the threats to their lives, mental health, and well-being. I understood my gender identity at this point, knowing that being assigned a certain gender at birth had caused me hardship and pain.

Throughout the intimate partner violence ordeals, law enforcement failed to provide the protection and justice I desperately sought. Their awareness of my orientation only compounded their prejudiced treatment. Thus, in my advocacy work, I tirelessly call for accountability and access to justice, recognizing it as the cornerstone of societal change.

Studying law with a focus on human rights, I once believed my goal of a discrimination-free society was attainable. Now, as a human rights defender, I strive to create a world where individuals of diverse sexual orientations, gender-diverse identities, and expressions can love and live without fear or discrimination.



The Advocates enjoyed a last meal together as a cohort before they checked out of International House.

“...in my advocacy work, I tirelessly call for accountability and access to justice, recognizing it as the cornerstone of societal change.”

FACULTY MENTOR

Widney Brown
Professor
 BARNARD COLLEGE

CLASSES

Advocating and Campaigning for Social & Economic Rights
 Affect and Activism

NETWORKING

NYC

Arcus Foundation
 Astraea
 Ford Foundation
 Global Philanthropic Project
 Human Rights Watch
 International Center for Research on Women
 Open Society Foundations
 Outright International
 SAGE- Advocacy & Services for LGBTQ+ Elders
 Scholars at Risk
 StoryCorps

NETWORKING

Washington, D.C.
 Free the Slaves
 Global Council on Equity
 Human Rights Campaign
 National Democratic Institute
 National Endowment for Democracy
 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
 U.S. Department of State

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Advocating for Human Rights and Corporate Responsibility in the Legal Sphere, Columbia Pre-Law Society, Columbia University
 Discussion on Countering Anti-LGBTIQ+ Legislation in Two Countries—Kyrgyzstan and Kenya, The Harriman Institute and LGBTQ and Allies at SIPA, Columbia University
 Political Roundtable: The Status of Human Rights in Africa, African Students Union, Columbia University
 International Human Rights Law Panel, Columbia University Women in Law and Politics
 Listening & Learning with Human Rights Advocates, George Clement Bond Center for African Education, Teachers College
 Political Roundtable: The Status of Human Rights in Africa, African Students Association, Columbia University

Student groups invited Imani and the advocates to speak about their work.



Amir, Esther and Imiri witnessed the partial solar eclipse over North America while in NYC.

JAMUNA TAMANG

TREASURER
*National Indigenous Disabled
Women Association*

NEPAL



I am Jamuna Tamang, a young indigenous woman with a physical disability—I am a burn survivor—belonging to the remote village of Sindupalchwok, which is one of the districts most affected by the 2015 earthquake. When I was only eight months old, a fire left me with a lifelong physical disability. My mom always feels guilty, but I don't blame her. She's a single mom raising six children, and she's my biggest inspiration. Even though patriarchal norms prevail in our society, my mom never gave up and made sure all of her children were educated. She taught me that everyone, no matter who they are, has rights and deserves respect.

Growing up, I witnessed firsthand discrimination faced by indigenous communities, particularly women with disabilities—a group to which I belong. This awareness fueled my belief that everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or ability, deserves respect and equal rights. My journey as a woman from an indigenous community struggling with a lifelong physical disability pushed me to advocate for those who are forced to experience similar discrimination, identity crises, and isolation.

It was difficult with my identities to access education, a fundamental human right. These experiences led me to question the status quo and compelled me to take action. I realized that if I, as an educated woman, experience difficulties in securing my rights, then others in my community, particularly those who carry multiple identities such as disability and indigeneity, face even greater challenges.

In 2013, I started volunteering for organizations focusing mainly on disability rights. Through my volunteer work, I learned about disability rights and gained valuable experience in advocacy. However, the 2015 Nepal earthquake changed my life again. I stayed with people with severe disabilities in an open space for nine months as their caregiver. During that time, I realized how there are layers of discrimination experienced by individuals with intersecting identities, such as being a woman, belonging to an indigenous community, and living with a disability.

The constant struggle to access resources and the lack of support for indigenous women with disabilities encouraged me to co-found one of the few women-led indigenous disabled organizations, the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association of Nepal (NIDWAN). I am motivated to continue fighting for the rights and dignity of indigenous women with disabilities.

My journey, marked by resilience and determination, has taught me the importance of standing up for what is right and that even small efforts can make a big difference. Through NIDWAN and my advocacy work, I am committed to creating a more inclusive and equitable society where every person, regardless of their background or abilities, can live with dignity and respect.

“ Growing up, I witnessed firsthand discrimination faced by indigenous communities, particularly women with disabilities—a group to which I belong. This awareness fueled my belief that everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or ability, deserves respect and equal rights. ”

FACULTY MENTOR

Prem Phyak

Associate Professor, International and Comparative Education
TEACHERS COLLEGE

CLASSES

Indigenous Oral Traditions and Anti-Colonial Oral Histories
Sexual and Reproductive Health in a Humanitarian Setting

NETWORKING

NYC

Adhikaar—for Human Rights and Social Justice
Ford Foundation
Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
Human Rights Watch
International Center for Research on Women
Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations
Plan International
UN Commission on the Status of Women
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Women Enabled International



Jamuna witnessed the partial solar eclipse over North America from the Morningside Campus.

NETWORKING

Washington, D.C.

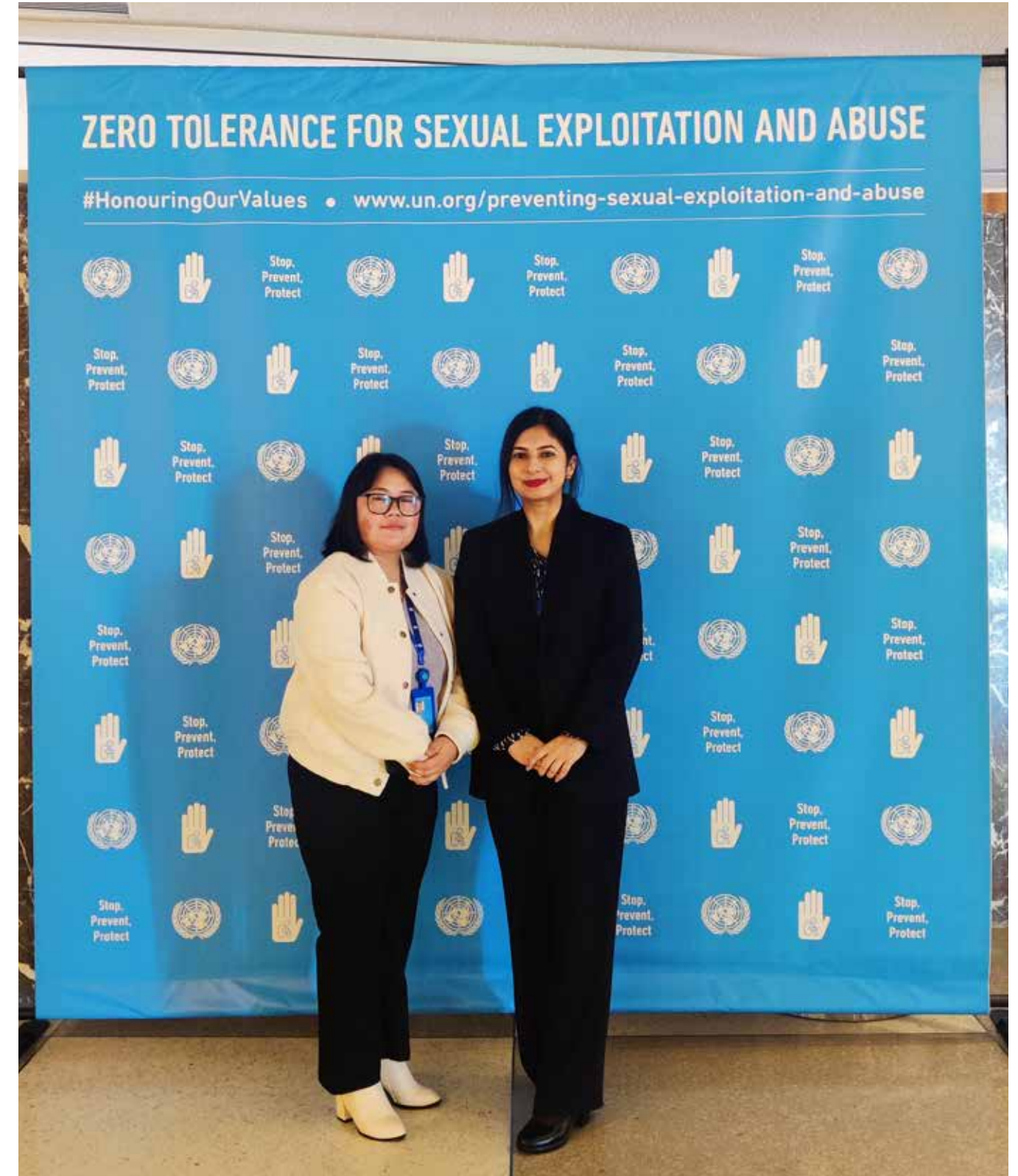
Amnesty International–USA
Center for Victims of Torture
Free the Slaves
Indian Law Resource Center
National Endowment for Democracy
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
U.S. Department of State

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

The Native American Council in Conversation with HRAP, Native American Council, Columbia University
Advocating for Indigenous Women’s Rights, Institute for the Study of Human Rights and the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, Columbia University



The Advocates networked extensively in Washington, D.C.



Jamuna and Amisha at the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

A portrait of Kris Elias Jika, a Black man with dreadlocks, wearing sunglasses and a black jacket, smiling. He is standing outdoors with a building and trees in the background.

KRIS ELIAS JIKA

PROGRAM COORDINATOR
*International
Accountability Project*

MALAWI

I can't say with certainty that I always knew I wanted to become a human rights advocate. I was not fortunate enough to have a career counselor to guide me during my secondary school education, and I applied to college programs without a clear understanding of what career I wanted to pursue. I ultimately earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science and Technology from the Polytechnic College of the University of Malawi. It wasn't until I was in my third year of college that I developed a better sense of what career path I wanted to pursue. I interned for a government department where I was responsible for reviewing drafts of environmental and social impact assessment studies that had been submitted by project developers. This role helped me understand how communities are adversely impacted by the projects in their communities. It also shed light on how the government does very little to ensure impacted communities are protected. From that point on, I decided that I would work for a civil society organization.

Since I started witnessing the injustices that marginalized communities face and how they are underserved, I have felt the need to serve others beyond myself while pursuing a career that would give my life meaning and a sense of purpose. This sentiment led me to become a human rights advocate. Despite being born and raised in Malawi's capital city, Lilongwe, where I had the opportunity to have a private education which was deemed to be more prestigious, I opted to attend public schools from primary school to the university level.

I guess I can say that I have always seen my place to be among the underprivileged. This is also why I chose a career path that supports marginalized and underserved communities.

After finishing my undergraduate studies, I spent the first few months volunteering for a local NGO before I found my first job working for a local civil society organization. It was there that I worked directly with and supported communities to demand their fundamental human rights. I then joined an international human rights NGO called the International Accountability Project (IAP), where I have been supporting communities whose lives are impacted by both private and public entities. More than six years later, I am still working for IAP. My experience working with marginalized and un(der)served communities has taught me a valuable lesson that still drives me today: If I want to change the world for the better, I have to impart positive change in my immediate community and environment.

My life and advocacy career are an ongoing journey of learning and growing while impacting change within the communities that I work with. HRAP has been the highlight of my learning journey since I graduated from university in 2015. Living and engaging with scholars and activists at Columbia and other CSOs in New York and Washington, D.C., has been the best learning experience of my life. The exchange of experiences and knowledge on different human rights issues has been nothing short of spectacular, and I cannot wait to impart what I have learned to the communities I work with.

“ My experience working with marginalized and un(der)served communities has taught me a valuable lesson that still drives me today: If I want to change the world for the better, I have to impart positive change in my immediate community and environment. ”

FACULTY MENTOR

Harry Verhoeven
 Senior Research Scholar,
 CENTER ON GLOBAL ENERGY POLICY
 Adjunct Professor of International
 and Public Affairs
 SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL
 AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CLASSES

Climate Justice
 Environment, Development
 and Politics in Africa
 Socio-Economic Rights Advocacy

NETWORKING

NYC
 Center for Economic And Social Rights
 Human Rights Watch
 International Center for Research
 on Women
 Open Society Foundations
 StoryCorps
 Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

NETWORKING

Washington, D.C.
 Amnesty International-USA
 Free the Slaves
 Indian Law Resource Center
 Inspection Panel, The World Bank
 National Endowment for Democracy
 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
 United States Agency for
 International Development
 U.S. Department of State

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Education Amidst Displacement,
 George Clement Bond Center for
 African Education, Teachers College
 Listening & Learning with Human
 Rights Advocates, George Clement
 Bond Center for African Education,
 Teachers College
 Political Roundtable: The State of
 Human Rights in Africa,
 African Students Association,
 Columbia University



Elias and the advocates engaged with students throughout the program.



The Advocates visited Smorgasburg.



Elias was the keynote speaker at the symposium Education Amidst Displacement at Teachers College.



The Advocates visited the Empire State Building.

**SAMIRA
ASGHARI**

**EQUALITY LEAGUE
AFGHANISTAN**



I am an Afghan member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In 2018 at the age of 24, I was elected as the youngest member of the IOC after serving in numerous administrative and executive positions for Afghan sports entities, including as a National Olympic Committee board member. As an athlete, I was elected captain of the Afghanistan Women's National Basketball Team in 2019. I currently work with Equality League, an American NGO, as a consultant to advance gender equality in sports by changing discriminatory policies and practices. I earned a political science and international relations degree from Kateb University in Kabul, Afghanistan, and a master's degree in Advanced Studies in Sports Administration and Technology from the International Academy of Sports Science and Technology in Switzerland. In 2021, I helped to evacuate at-risk athletes when the Taliban regained power. I advocate for the restoration of human rights in education and sports—not only for Afghan women and girls but also for the overall health of the country. Because of the Taliban, I have been a refugee two times—first, as a child, and now, when I must live outside of my country again.

My advocacy journey started when I returned to Afghanistan from Iran in 2003. I was able to go to school, play basketball, and work. Sports gave me so many opportunities. However, even when sports were available, it was never easy for Afghan women and girls due to society and social norms. It was a radical act for me to hold a basketball or to wear sports clothing in public as a girl. I wore my Converse All-Star sneakers off the court on the streets of Kabul to make the point that all women and girls have the right to play sports and to have access to education. As an athlete, I became an activist for human rights, particularly women's rights, using basketball as a vehicle to demand equality and human rights. In that way, I have always been an advocate since childhood, even without realizing it back then. I believe one individual can change the lives of many other humans and impact society at large.

Attending HRAP at Columbia University taught me new ways to demand equality and human rights. Most importantly, I have networked extensively and have had the amazing opportunity to meet

international human rights defenders, human rights organizations, and foundations. I also had the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences with my fellow advocates.

I believe having faith in the work I do keeps me motivated to strive for more and to be hopeful for social justice and, ultimately, positive change. My hope for the future is that all Afghan women and girls and all people everywhere will have the same opportunity to live with dignity as human beings.



The 2023-24 cohort enjoyed being together.

“As an athlete, I became an activist for human rights, particularly women's rights, using basketball as a vehicle to demand equality and human rights.”

FACULTY MENTOR

Mary S. Worden
Adjunct Associate Professor
International and Public Affairs
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CLASSES

Campaigning for Change through
Media, Mobilization and the Power
of Persuasion
Environment, Development & Politics
in Africa
International Human Rights Law

NETWORKING

Amnesty International USA
Global Network of
Women Peacebuilders
Human Rights Watch
Open Society Foundations
SAGE—Advocacy & Services
for LGBTQ+ Elders
StoryCorps
UN Commission on
the Status of Women
UN Women

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Multi Stakeholder Partnerships &
Practices to Push Forward for Gender
Equality, UN Commission on the Status
of Women
Youth Forum Opening with UN Women
Director-General Dr. Sima Sami
Bahous, UN Commission on
the Status of Women



Samira was interviewed by UN Women during the Commission on the Status of Women.



Samira and other advocates had speaking engagements at the UN Commission on the Status of Women.



Lindsey Hutchison of Plan International kicked off the in-person workshops with two sessions on how to engage with stakeholders.



The Advocates attended the opera during their first weekend in NYC.

3

WORKSHOPS, CONVERSATIONS, AND LECTURES



Michael Bochenek (second from left) and Kyle Knight (second from right) led a workshop series on Research, Writing and Documentation.

Research, Documentation, and Writing

MICHAEL GARCIA BOCHENEK

*Senior Counsel,
Children's Rights Division*

KYLE KNIGHT

*Interim Deputy Director, LGBT Rights
Senior Researcher on Health and LGBT Rights
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH*

Michael Garcia Bochenek and Kyle Knight led a six-part workshop that covered the conceptualization of a research project, interviewing victims and witnesses, interviewing perpetrators and accomplices, and writing.

An Introduction to StoryCorps

CHAPIN MONTAGUE

*National Facilitator
STORYCORPS*

Chapin Montague led a comprehensive workshop covering StoryCorps' mission, signature conversation style, operational procedures, tiers of service, style, community outreach efforts, and tools for communities while sharing some of the organization's work. Chapin also invited the advocates to record conversations with StoryCorps.

Introduction to Candid

TRACY KAUFMAN

*Programs Manager
CANDID*

Tracy Kaufman offered the advocates a comprehensive look at the resources available through Candid's online resources.



Some of the Advocates accepted an invitation from StoryCorps to record their stories.

Fundraising

ERIK DETIGER

*Founder and Managing Director
PHILANTROPIA, INC.*

With more than a decade of experience working in the field of international philanthropy and fundraising, Erik provided the advocates with an overview of concepts and strategies in international fundraising. The four-part workshop series focused on fundraising from institutional donors and individuals.

Video Advocacy

BUKENI WARUZI

*Executive Director
FREE THE SLAVES*

Bukeni Waruzi led a workshop on the effective use of video advocacy as a complement to traditional approaches to human rights advocacy. The advocates learned the ways in which stories, visual evidence and personal testimony can be used as part of a human rights advocacy strategy to inform policy. Bukeni spent nearly a decade at WITNESS, the video advocacy organization, as Senior Program Manager for Africa and the Middle East. He is currently a board member.

Advocating in Challenging Situations

LINDSEY HUTCHISON

Global Head of Humanitarian Policy, Advocacy, Influencing, and Campaigns
PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Lindsey discussed ways to discuss challenging topics and advocate with audiences who might not be receptive to hearing them, how to convince stakeholders persuasively and safely, as well as how to effectively introduce yourself, your organization, your work, and your asks in impromptu conversations or meetings. She conducted two-minute mock interactions with high-level diplomats at a reception where the advocates had to represent themselves, and shared feedback afterwards.



Amisha Lindsey Hutchison Head of Global Humanitarian Policy, Advocacy and Diplomacy Unit at Plan International offered the advocates a workshop on how to engage with stakeholders.

Human Rights Documentation

PAMELA GRAHAM, PHD

Director, Humanities & Global Studies
Director, Center for Human Rights Documentation

KAOUKAB CHEBARO

Head, Global Studies
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

The Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research at Columbia University holds an extensive collection of archives of human rights NGOs. Pamela and Kaoukab discussed the collecting program and the process of working with NGOs to preserve their records. They noted the value and importance of preserving the record of human rights advocacy. The CHRDR is also developing the Human Rights Web Archive, an online resource that captures and preserves the websites of human rights organizations and blogs. They demonstrated the HRWA and discussed the issues associated with preserving this information, and encouraged advocates to consider contributing their websites to this collecting effort.

Introduction to Columbia University Libraries

YUUSUF CARUSO, PHD

African Studies Librarian
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Yuusuf introduced the advocates to the Columbia University Libraries, which comprises 13 million volumes, over 160,000 journals and serials, as well as extensive electronic resources, manuscripts, rare books, microforms, maps, and graphic and audio-visual materials.

Introduction to Vergil

VICTOR JANDRES RIVERA

Student, Columbia College

Victor introduced the advocates to Vergil, the platform used by Columbia for course planning.



Isabel Flota and Jade Jacobs-Wort of the 2022-23 HRAP and Wisdom Bebli of the 2019 HRAP shared their experiences with the advocates before they traveled to NYC.

Introduction to the Foundation Directory

STEPHANIE V. GREPO

Institute for the Study of Human Rights
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Stephanie introduced the advocates to the online *Foundation Directory*, the most comprehensive prospect research tool for fundraisers, with over 239,000+ grant maker profiles. She taught them how to search for grant makers who have funded organizations working on causes and with communities similar to those they serve.

Effective Presentations

STEPHANIE V. GREPO

Institute for the Study of Human Rights
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

The Advocates learned how to make concise and effective presentations on their work. Stephanie V. Grepo encouraged the Advocates to provide constructive feedback to one another as they learned to make powerful presentations.

Coping Strategies for International Students

YANIV PHILLIPS, PHD

Senior Psychologist
COLUMBIA HEALTH

Dr. Phillips discussed the timeline of emotions facing international students new to campus and offered coping strategies. He addressed ways to maximize the classroom experience, how to navigate forming new relationships when living in a language and a culture that are not your own, getting comfortable, learning social norms, and managing expectations.

Session with HRAP Alumni

Isabel Flota and Jade Jacobs-Wort of the 2022-23 HRAP and Wisdom Bebli of the 2019 HRAP shared their experiences with the 2023-24 advocates in a lively and laugh-filled session before the new advocates traveled to NYC. The new advocates said the session allayed their concerns and fears about living in NYC and made them look forward to meeting even more HRAP alumni.

4

SUPPORT

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights is grateful to the following for their financial support of the advocates in the 2023-24 program.

**AMBASSADOR NICHOLAS PLATT
IN MEMORY OF HIS WIFE, SHEILA PLATT**

ARCUS FOUNDATION

**FORD FOUNDATION, LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S FORUM

WELLSPRING PHILANTHROPIC FUND

HARRIMAN INSTITUTE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

1996 ADVOCATE TWESIGYE JACKSON KAGURI

2009 ADVOCATE AKINYI OCHOLLA

2009 ADVOCATE KARYN KAPLAN



The advocates could often be found together both on and off campus.

5

TESTIMONIALS

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is the opportunity to meet with human rights advocates from around the world. Their dedication and determination for advocating for fundamental freedoms, despite the challenges they might face, provides an immense amount of motivation to myself, and my colleagues, to continue our work in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. Our annual meeting with Columbia's Human Rights Advocates Program participants is no exception. The advocates shared invaluable information about their work, observations about the operating environment of civil society in their countries, and provided thoughtful recommendations for actions the United States could take to continue to support human rights defenders globally.

CAROLYN DALLMANN

*Foreign Affairs Officer
Bureau of Democracy,
Human Rights, and Labor
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE*

In the last two years Nicki Pombier and I have had four HRAP advocates in our oral history class. They have enormously enriched our classroom with their commitment: to their work, to experimenting with new ideas and approaches to using testimony and oral history, and to creating meaningful connections with our students. I am so grateful to have taught these fellows, and continue to be in touch with several of them.

ELISABETH ZAPOL

*Adjunct Faculty
Oral History Master of Arts Program
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY*

Through our work at Teacher College's Center for African Education, our students and faculty benefited greatly from our interactions with this year's human rights advocates. During our Education Amidst Displacement: Reimagining the Roles of Refugee-led Organizations Symposium in March 2024, Elias Jika served as our keynote speaker. He helped frame the event by sharing the work that he has facilitated through the International Accountability Project and the critical importance of grassroots and community-driven leadership across the humanitarian-development nexus. Later in the spring term, Esther Kimani, Imani Kimiri, and Elias Jika shared the work they are doing through a special Lunch and Learn: Listening and Learning with Human Rights Advocates panel discussion. During the moderated panel discussion and Q&A with the audience, the Advocates shared their motivations for pursuing social justice work and the successes and challenges they have faced along the way. Their open and honest reflections both engaged and inspired the audience, and left them wanting to learn even more about the advocates' respective rights-based endeavors in Kenya and Malawi. We look forward to maintaining contact with Esther, Imani, and Elias and welcoming future advocates to collaborate with the Center for African Education.

MARY MENDENHALL, ED.D.

*Associate Professor, International
& Comparative Education
Director, George Clement Bond Center
for African Education
TEACHERS COLLEGE,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY*

Free the Slaves was honored to host the 2023-24 HRAP participants. The roundtable discussion held at our office in Washington, D.C., provided an in-depth understanding of the issues the advocates are working on. In my capacity as a board member of WITNESS, I led the training on video advocacy, which is a key part of the capacity building for the advocates in strategically using video documentation for change. It was fulfilling to hear some of the advocates, such as Amisha Adhikari, say, "This is the best training session ever for me. This is more than what I expected. I will become a video advocate."

I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the HRAP network and I am thankful for every opportunity to meet the advocates and to be part of the program.

BUKENI WARUZI

*Executive Director
FREE THE SLAVES*

It was fantastic to have Elias Jika participate in our SIPA class on "Environment, Development and Politics in Africa." As a passionate human rights advocate who has worked in different parts of the continent, Elias generously shared his first-hand experiences of helping communities to defend their rights to be consulted in big infrastructure projects such as dams or mining that will reshape their lives and environments. For his classmates, learning about how to advocate with communities for proper compensation from the government of Malawi or how to use legal tools to help farmers fight illegal expropriation was extremely complementary to the more historical or theoretical components of the course.

HARRY VERHOEVEN

*Senior Research Scholar, Center on
Global Energy Policy, School of International
and Public Affairs Adjunct Professor
of International and Public Affairs
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY*

Amir Mukambetov and Andrea Tock took my advanced research seminar, Affect and Activism, in Spring 2024. They each shared valuable insights from locations outside the US that profoundly enriched the course conversations. Amir brought nuance to discussions about the relationship between authoritarianism, religion and LGBTQ advocacy and the challenges of navigating imperial discourses that posit gay rights as "western." Andrea's thoughtful commentary on non-profit organizations in the Global South helped us think through the affective labor involved in service provision and the limitations imposed by funders. I can't emphasize enough how beneficial it was for all of my students to engage with the wealth of "real-world" experiences on which Amir and Andrea drew and to have their US-centric tendencies challenged by the knowledge Amir and Andrea gained in Central Asia and Latin America respectively. I would happily welcome future HRAP participants into my classes!

MANIJEH MORADIAN

*Assistant Professor of Women's,
Gender and Sexuality Studies
BARNARD UNIVERSITY*

“ I can't emphasize enough how beneficial it was for all of my students to engage with the wealth of 'real-world' experiences on which Amir and Andrea drew and to have their US-centric tendencies challenged by the knowledge Amir and Andrea gained in Central Asia and Latin America respectively.

MANIJEH MORADIAN



6
ISHR STAFF

IRENE ATAMIAN
Business Manager

JOANNE BAUER
Senior Researcher, Business and Human Rights

JACKIE DUGARD
Senior Lecturer in the Discipline of Human Rights and Director, Graduate Studies

YASMINE ERGAS
Director of the Woman and Gender in Global Affairs Network

STEPHANIE V. GREPO
Director, Capacity Building

CRISTIANA GRIGORE
Founder of the Roma Peoples Project

GERGANA HALPERN
Director, Education

JULIA MANNES
Undergraduate Studies Coordinator

MAGDALENA MEDLEY
Communications and Outreach Coordinator

ANNA MILLER
Graduate Program Manager

GLENN MITOMA
Lecturer in the Discipline of Human Rights and Director, Undergraduate Studies

JOSEPH SLAUGHTER
Director, ISHR Associate Professor, English and Comparative Literature

ELSA STAMATOPOULOU
Director, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program

TIM WYMAN-MCCARTHY
Lecturer in the Discipline of Human Rights and Associate Director of Graduate Studies

YVETTE ZAPATA
Finance Coordinator

7

HRAP ADMINISTRATION



Stephanie with 2009 Advocate Akinyi Ocholla who visited NYC in 2024.

STEPHANIE V. GREPO (she/her) joined ISHR in 2008. Since then, she has secured funding to dedicate openings in HRAP to LGBTQI+, Indigenous Peoples, and disability rights advocates; encouraged HRAP alumni—who can be found in 95 countries around the globe—to cooperate across class years and geographic boundaries, and advised advocates on raising funds for their organizations. She has guided alumni on their work ranging from youth empowerment in South Sudan and Bosnia-Herzegovina to capacity building for Indigenous Peoples to advocacy around prisoners’ rights in Nigeria and Zambia. In 2011, she created a summer program at ISHR through which Columbia University students have volunteered at organizations led by alumni of ISHR’s fellowships programs around the globe. She has organized side events on advocacy tools and strategies at the Committee on the Status of Women and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. She designed and secured funds for ISHR’s first massive open online course, which is on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and can be found on edX.

With the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe from 2000 to 2007, Stephanie developed multi-ethnic experiential education programs in Kosovo; created and led a grant making program to support confidence-building projects in North Macedonia; worked on return and integration issues and led a field office of 10 staff in one of the most politically sensitive regions of Croatia; and served as the youth and education advisor to the OSCE Head of Mission in Serbia. She has observed elections in Bosnia and Georgia.

For nearly a decade, she was a lecturer at The New School where she led graduate students through practicums with clients including the International Rescue Committee and Transparency International. At The School of The New York Times, she developed and taught the school’s first human rights course for high school students. She is a graduate of The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Her volunteer work in resettlement with Catholic Charities of Greater Boston led her to focus on human rights.



Victor completed his undergraduate degree at Columbia University this spring with a double major in Human Rights and Ethnicity and Race Studies.

VICTOR JANDRES RIVERA (he/him) supported two HRAP cohorts as a work-study student. He scheduled networking opportunities in NYC and DC, recorded the advocates for the HRAP channel on YouTube, copyedited grants and other documents for the advocates, and photographed them for the annual report.

Victor completed his undergraduate degree at Columbia University this spring with a double major in Human Rights and Ethnicity and Race Studies. He has been deeply involved in racial and immigration justice work that intersects with educational rights. He served as a Students of Color Advisory Board member during all four years at Columbia. Victor also worked as an immigration clinic director for the student-led organization Students for Sanctuary. Through his leadership role, Victor helped organize pro se immigration clinics, drives to meet the material needs of migrants, and English classes for refugees. Victor has also contributed to faculty research on the racialization of immigrant students and the barriers to education that immigrant-origin children face in NYC public schools. As a Laidlaw Fellow, he traveled internationally to work as a children’s rights and sustainable development intern for World Vision Ghana. He was a human rights intern at the American Federation of Teachers, contributing to efforts that support refugee children. Victor was a Roosevelt in Washington Fellow, focusing on racial justice and progressive politics in Washington, D.C.

Victor will continue his education at Yale Law School in August, where he will pursue his Juris Doctor degree. He hopes to build on his human rights education at Yale and prepare himself for a career in impact litigation. Victor plans on pursuing a federal judicial clerkship and Yale’s public interest career opportunities.

ISHR is deeply grateful to Victor for his good will, kindness, dependability, and valued contributions to HRAP.



1993 ADVOCATE LUIS FELIPE POLO of Peru was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in recognition of his contributions toward advancing global education during the Sixth World Summit on Educational Globalization and Transdisciplinarity 2024 hosted by the International Federation of FINTES Specialists in Mexico City.



2010 ADVOCATE GISÈLE NGUNGUA SANGUA has been named the Provincial Minister of Gender, Women and Children of Haut-Katanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She founded Action Large des Femmes Avocates, which provides legal assistance to women in prison and victims of violence.



2011 ADVOCATE ELVIS MBEMBE BINDA has been appointed Dean of the School of Law of the University of Rwanda. He also teaches Economic and Financial Law with an emphasis on the East African Community regional economic integration. He earned a PhD at the University of Utrecht. He is the

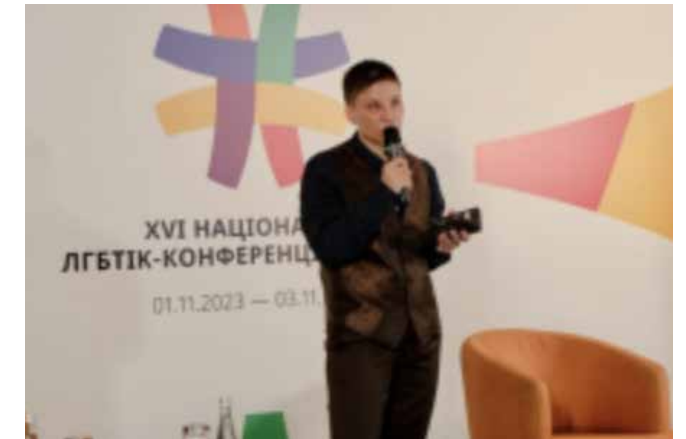
president and a co-founder of the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, which focuses on the rights of detainees, Indigenous People, women and children, the LGBT community, the disabled and people living with HIV/AIDS in Rwanda.



2016 ADVOCATE SAMUEL MATSIKURE was awarded the 2023 African Feather of the Year at Africa's biggest queer awards ceremony which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa.



2016 ADVOCATE AEHSHATOU MANU of Cameroon sent the following update: "I am at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva where I serve as a Senior Fellow/Consultant at the Indigenous and Minority Section, Secretariat of the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and the Indigenous Fellowship Programme assisting Mr. Morse Flores, Secretary of the UN Voluntary Fund and Coordinator of the Indigenous/ Minority Fellowship Programmes."



2018 ADVOCATE LENNY EMSON was appointed to the board of OutRight International. Lenny is the Executive Director of Capital Rainbow Refuge.



2018 ADVOCATE MARIJANA SAVIC, the executive director of Atina NGO in Serbia, was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Atina provides long-term and comprehensive support to women and girls, survivors of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.



While in NYC for the UN Commission on the Status of Women, **2019 ADVOCATE NKALI BIGGIE** visited Dr. Theodurs Sandfort. Dr. Sandfort was Biggie's faculty mentor in HRAP.



The StoryCorps homepage highlighted its interview with **2021-22 ADVOCATE DOMINIQUE ST. VIL** (left) of Haiti throughout December 2023. Dominique is the Executive Director and Administrative Director of OTRAH (Organisation Trans d'Haiti). During the interview, Dominique discussed what being an activist means for him. He said "I fit right in, it was always what I wanted to do and it is like I didn't have any purpose before and there it was." He also talked about when his trans advocacy group, OTRAH (Organisation Trans d'Haiti) became its own organization. Dominique said, "One of the happiest moments (of being an activist) is when I finally got to the place where it was not a dream anymore, it was a reality. It is still in the making but it is real, it is not something I'm talking about, it is not a project, it is there." Over the past 10 years, HRAP participants have been learning about oral history from StoryCorps. Many have chosen to accept the organization's offer to record their stories.



2021-22 ADVOCATE DANNIEL ALEJANDRO PINILLA CADAVID of Colombia was appointed Director of Communications and Press of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Danniell was previously with the Center for Justice and International Law—CEJIL.



2022-23 ADVOCATE ANTONIA MOREIRA was featured in a recent podcast from Harvard University and in OutRight International's campaign on legal gender recognition. Antonia is the Director of Strategy at Atelier TRANSmoras Association, a trans-led non-profit organization in Brazil that works through economic empowerment and artistic production to change the scenario of violence towards trans people.



On a panel held at Columbia Law School and co-sponsored by ISHR among others, **2022-23 ADVOCATE ANA MARIA BELIQUE** of Reconoci.do, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor, and an advocate from Côte d'Ivoire discussed efforts to forge a protective legal framework for human rights activism in light of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Ana Maria shared with the audience the challenges that she and her colleagues face from the authorities in the Dominican Republic when they peacefully protest the treatment of Dominicans of Haitian descent by the Government. When asked by a student what they could do to support her, she encouraged students to raise awareness of the situation through research, social media, and press releases.

9

HRAP ALUMNI VISITS TO ISHR



Jeffrey returned to ISHR carrying the same tote bag he received during HRAP orientation in 2016.

2016 ADVOCATE JEFFREY WALIMBA WAMBAYA

In February 2024, 2016 Advocate Jeffrey Walimba Wambaya, a program manager at ISHTAR MSM in Kenya, met with participants in HRAP. Jeffrey was joined by ISHTAR's director, Peter Njane. ISHTAR is a community-based organization that advances the sexual health rights of Men who have sex with Men (MSM), works to reduce the stigma and discrimination affecting them, and advocates for their rights to access health care, including STI/HIV and AIDS related care and treatment.

Jeffrey opened his talk by welcoming the current advocates to the HRAP "family." Jeffrey fondly recalled his time in HRAP and shared stories of how the members of his cohort supported one another. He said that HRAP taught him to be "disciplined"—to be on time for meetings and workshops, to prepare for meetings in advance, and to respect the opportunity that he had been given by being accepted to HRAP which he said is a program that "many aspire to join." Jeffrey said that he had applied multiple times for HRAP before being accepted in 2016. He said that whenever he mentions HRAP to fellow human rights

Jeffrey said that HRAP gave him "wings to fly."

practitioners they ask him how he was able to gain admission to the "prestigious and well-known" program when so many have been rejected.

Jeffrey pointed to how the sessions on providing an effective presentation in three minutes or less led by Stephanie Grepo of ISHR helped him to learn how to interest others—especially donors—in ISHTAR's work. He said the weekly sessions with his mentor, Dr. Theodorus Sandfort of Mailman, helped him to learn how to develop research projects that make use of the data collected by ISHTAR as well as how to encourage donors to support the research that ISHTAR needs. Peter highlighted how important this benefit of Jeffrey's participation in HRAP has been to ISHTAR in terms of expanding the scope of the organization's work.

Jeffrey said that while in HRAP, he regularly shared what he was learning in the program with his colleagues back home. He shared the syllabi from his classes, info from the meetings he was having and exercises from the skill-based workshops he was attending. He said he wanted his colleagues to participate in HRAP with him so that he would not be "above" them when he returned.

When asked by Amisha Adhikari, a current advocate from Nepal, to name an intangible benefit of HRAP, Jeffrey immediately replied "confidence." He said that the program gave him 'wings to fly' which he has been doing ever since 2016. He pointed to the many opportunities that he has had thanks to HRAP including serving on the ICAP CQUIN Advisory Group and having a longstanding partnership with SAGE—Advocacy and Services for LGBTQ+ Elders. He concluded by encouraging the advocates to make the most of the opportunity because they were "privileged" to be admitted to HRAP.



Agnes was thrilled to receive a hard copy of the 2010 HRAP report. She said she would find "a place of honor" for it at her home in Uganda.

2010 ADVOCATE DR. AGNES ATIM APEA

2010 Advocate Dr. Agnes Atim Apea visited ISHR in March 2024 while she was in NYC with the Ugandan delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

In 2021, Agnes was elected to the Parliament of Uganda as a representative of Amolatar District. She is the Founder and CEO of Hope Co-ops, a women farmers' cooperative with more than 50,000 members in the Lango sub-region. Agnes founded Hope Co-ops to empower rural women to fight injustice through agribusiness. Agnes completed her PhD in International Development at the University of Reading in the UK. She holds a Master's in Development Studies from Uganda Martyrs University. Before being elected a Member of Parliament, she was the Chairperson of the Local Government Finance Commission which advises the President

Agnes said everything that she has accomplished can be traced back to HRAP.

of Uganda on budgetary matters. She also served as a gender and development consultant.

Agnes said that everything she has accomplished can be traced back to HRAP. "HRAP gave me so much exposure to skills, ideas, networks and people. I came here focused on HIV/AIDS and left knowing that I could do even more to serve my community." Agnes fondly remembered her mentor, Dr. David Hoos of ICAP at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health.

She added that the skills and knowledge that she gained through HRAP's workshops serve her to this day—and in ways that she couldn't have possibly imagined when she was in the program. For example, she said that she always stressed to the President of Uganda that the country must look beyond taxes for other sources of revenue. She said this came directly from Erik Detiger's workshop series on fundraising where he stressed that organizations should never rely only on one or two donors.

Agnes took great pride in saying that she has remained in contact with her HRAP cohort over the years. She said that they supported and sustained one another throughout the program. She was thrilled to receive a hard copy of the 2010 HRAP report and said it would have a place of honor in her home.

Agnes said she did not want to miss the opportunity to return to ISHR to thank the program for its contributions not only to her but also to everyone else who has been in HRAP. She said that while HRAP opened many doors for her, including a Vital Voices fellowship, it also pushed her to do more including pursuing a PhD and to be more for her community.

10

HRAP'S 35TH ANNIVERSARY

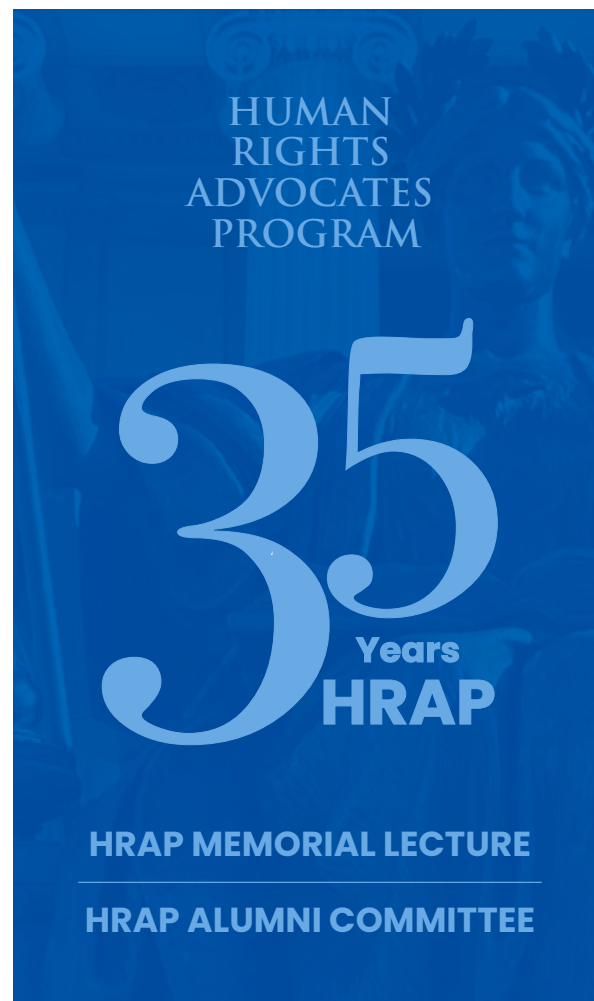
2024 marked the 35th anniversary of HRAP. As part of the anniversary, ISHR established the HRAP Memorial Lecture and an HRAP Alumni Committee and invited Columbia University alumni who had been HRAP work-study students during their studies to share their memories of the program.

INAUGURAL HRAP MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) and the Human Rights Institute at Columbia Law welcomed Bukeni Waruzi, the executive director of Free the Slaves, who gave the inaugural Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) Memorial Lecture. Nearly 50 Columbia faculty, staff, students and members of the human rights community in NYC gathered on Thursday, February 15th, to honor the life and activism of Raoul Kitungano who attended the 2016 HRAP at ISHR.

An expert on children affected by armed conflict, modern slavery, human rights and international criminal justice, Bukeni spoke about Raoul's mastery of the human rights situation in the DRC as well as Raoul's willingness to work at great risk to himself in order to improve the lives of people throughout the country.

Raoul Kitungano advocated at Justice for All for the rights of those impacted by mining corporations and other extractive industries in the DRC. Raoul published several research papers on the relationship between mining, armed conflict, and human rights abuses in the DRC, as well as on electoral monitoring, mining code reform, and community land protection. He was dedicated to continuing to monitor the impact of rural development and poverty reduction projects in the DRC, as well as advocating for the social, cultural, and economic rights of local communities. He died on September 15, 2022, after a brief illness.



Inaugural HRAP Memorial Lecture REMEMBERING 2016 ADVOCATE RAOUL KITUNGANO Lecture by Bukeni Waruzi, Executive Director of Free the Slaves

Thursday, February 15
12:00-1:00 pm
Columbia Law, JGH 105

Raoul Kitungano was the Coordinator of Justice Pour Tous (Justice For All), an NGO in the Democratic Republic of Congo that advocates for the political, economic, cultural, and environmental rights of local communities impacted by mining corporations and other extractive enterprises. Raoul published several research papers on the relationship between mining, armed conflict, and human rights abuses in the DRC, as well as on electoral monitoring, mining code reform, and community land protection. He was dedicated to continuing to monitor the impact of rural development and poverty reduction projects in the DRC, as well as advocating for the social, cultural, and economic rights of local communities. He attended the 2016 Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights. After a brief illness, he died on September 15, 2022.

Bukeni Waruzi is an expert on children affected by armed conflict, modern slavery, human rights and international criminal justice. He is the Executive Director of Free the Slaves, a global organization working to combat human trafficking, forced labor, modern slavery and child labor around the world. He previously served as Executive Director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, where he advanced the Children and Armed Conflict agenda at the Security Council. He founded and served as the Executive Director of AJEDI-Ka/Child Soldiers Project, a Congolese organization that protects children affected by armed conflict. As director for Africa and the Middle East at WITNESS for a decade, he trained human rights advocates on video advocacy and evidence of human rights abuses and how to use the evidence to advocate for justice. He was instrumental in the conviction of a Congolese warlord by the International Criminal Court for the recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed conflict in the DRC.



Click here to RSVP:
<https://bit.ly/3vXy8Fg>

Inaugural HRAP Memorial Lecture Remembering Raoul Kitungano.

Columbia Alumni Reflect on HRAP

As part of HRAP's 35th anniversary, ISHR asked Columbia University alumni who had supported HRAP over the years to share their memories.



Junghwa Sam Lee with members of the 2011 cohort.

JUNGHWA "SAM" LEE

MA, International Development Education, 2012
TEACHERS COLLEGE

My journey began as a graduate student, from Seoul, South Korea, stepping onto the bustling campus of Columbia University, with a heart full of dreams and a somewhat lofty ambition to make a change in the world through education. My graduate studies in international educational development focused on learning design and program approaches within an international development context. I thought I could 'save the world' one lesson at a time—classic graduate student optimism.

However, my defining professional experience unfolded during my participation in the Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) at Columbia University in 2011. As the capacity building program coordinator, I was responsible for planning and delivering workshops and fundraising events for 12 Human Rights Advocates, collaborating with Columbia faculty and industry partners in New York. I also coordinated their week-long field trip in Washington D.C., organizing hands-on professional sessions with human rights organizations. This marked my first professional chapter in the city and transformed me from an eager graduate student to a professional deeply committed to empowering global leaders.

Under the mentorship of Stephanie Grepo, I gained invaluable insights into program leadership and education. Her guidance was not only foundational in shaping my work ethics and practices but also ingrained a deep-seated commitment to leadership and education in me. Working alongside her offered me a hands-on apprenticeship in effective program management and leadership.

Deepening relationships with HRAP Advocates both during and after the program broadened my worldview. Discussions and workshops with Advocates from diverse backgrounds exposed me to the varied and complex challenges that different global populations face—from protecting women's rights in post-conflict regions to navigating the challenges LGBTQIA+ communities encounter worldwide. These interactions were more than educational; they served as a repository of rich, real-world stories of resilience and growth. The post-program successes and enduring changes enacted by my Advocate friends in their communities profoundly inspired me.

This immersion was instrumental in uncovering the critical need for upskilling and providing platforms for these global leaders to realize their professional and personal aspirations. It reinforced my role in creating learning opportunities that catalyze transformative change, steering me towards designing learning programs tailored to the unique needs of leaders and organizations. HRAP thus became a pivotal moment in my career, laying the foundation for my mission to empower global leaders for their future.

Following HRAP, my journey continued with roles at the United Nations and various INGOs, where I focused on developing learning programs that addressed the multifaceted challenges confronting our world today. This chapter was instrumental in shaping my commitment to building lifelong learning programs for busy professionals worldwide, driven by firsthand observations of global adversities.

My journey then steered towards learning innovations and technologies, starting at Columbia Business School's digital executive education programs and subsequently at an EdTech company. There, I leveraged product methodologies and cutting-edge technologies to craft learning solutions that cater to the unique needs of working professionals and their organizations, challenging the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to professional development. Currently, as part of the learning design and innovation team at a global firm, I continue my quest to empower leaders from all parts of the world with the digital and technological leadership skills necessary to navigate future disruptions.

As we celebrate the 35th anniversary of HRAP, I look back on my journey with immense gratitude and pride. From contributing to the program's 25th-anniversary logo to being a proud working mom of a six-year-old son, my path is a testament to the transformative power of learning, leadership, and HRAP's enduring legacy.

Junghwa "Sam" Lee is a learning design expert at McKinsey & Co.

“HRAP thus became a pivotal moment in my career, laying the foundation for my mission to empower global leaders for their future.”



ROSE ANDERSON

MA, Human Rights Studies, 2014
ISHR

I worked with HRAP from 2013 to 2014, while I pursued my MA in Human Rights at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) at Columbia. I knew the HRAP program from my previous stint at WITNESS, a human rights nonprofit based in Brooklyn. There, I had the opportunity to meet with HRAP participants in 2012 to present WITNESS's work in training and disseminating best practices among activists and advocacy groups seeking to use video as a human rights tool. I was immediately impressed with HRAP

and the vital human rights work being conducted by the Advocates in their respective home countries.

When I joined HRAP in 2013, I had the pleasure of conducting and editing video interviews with Advocates from Nepal, Guatemala, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Liberia, and South Sudan, which gave the Advocates a chance to share more about their human rights work and inspiration. I also set up the program's YouTube channel so these kinds of interviews could continue for the cohorts to come. I later became the Program Coordinator for 2014, and had the chance to see an entire full cycle of the HRAP program, from the incoming applications for the 2014 cohort, to later preparing for these Advocate's arrival in the Fall semester. In my role I participated in the

orientation sessions, set up informational meetings and skills-building sessions for the Advocates with local human rights nonprofits, and prepared for the Advocates' networking trip in DC to meet with nonprofits and funders relevant to their areas of work.

One memory that has stuck with me was taking a few of the Advocates to the Social Security Office in Manhattan and realizing how challenging these kinds of bureaucratic processes can be to newcomers, especially when these steps need to be taken almost immediately after landing in a new country, something that I have kept in mind in my current work supporting threatened scholars who are also newcomers to their respective locations and figuring out new systems. I remember also being impressed by how quickly the Advocates, not knowing each other beforehand, came together as a group, and witnessed many occasions where members of the group would lift one another up, whether to highlight an aspect of their colleague's work they may have been too humble to share, or simply to help each other navigate their new city and get to the various meetings on time. There was a lot of mutual learning, and a lot of laughter, too.

I've been continually impressed by Stephanie Grepo's dedication to the program. She and the selection committee carefully select each cohort, secure funding for each respective visit, and immediately begin preparations for the Advocates' arrival, from visas to flights to accommodations. (HRAP was my first introduction to the J-1 visa, a process I now know well.)

The program requires year-round effort though each visit is a semester long, and Stephanie leads the work and drives the program forward with admirable dedication, intention, humor and a deep respect for the program's commitment to giving additional tools to these Advocates doing vital human rights work in their countries and regions. It was an honor to work with the program and to meet Advocates making such significant contributions to the protection and promotion of human rights around the world. I wish HRAP many more decades of success.

Rose is now the Director of Protection Services at Scholars at Risk, a network that serves to promote academic freedom and protect threatened scholars. Rose graduated with an MA in Human Rights Studies from the Institute for the Study of Human Rights in 2014.

“ I remember also being impressed by how quickly the advocates, not knowing each other beforehand, came together as a group, and witnessed many occasions where members of the group would lift one another up, whether to highlight an aspect of their colleague's work they may have been too humble to share, or simply to help each other navigate their new city and get to the various meetings on time. ”



Caroline Doenmez (left) with Aviaja Egede Lynge of the 2014 HRAP.

CAROLINE FIDAN TYLER DOENMEZ

MA, Human Rights Studies, 2015

ISHR

It would be difficult to overstate the impact that my time at Columbia had on my life trajectory. I arrived there in the fall of 2013 excited, anxious, and unsure of exactly who I was trying to become. One of the major formative elements of my time there that helped my sense of self come into focus was my involvement with the Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP).

I began working with HRAP in 2014 as a Program Assistant, and then served as Program Coordinator

in 2015. First and foremost, I valued the connections I formed with my supervisor, Stephanie Grepo, and Irene Atamian, both of whom taught me so much and gave me a sense of community at Columbia. My involvement in HRAP was a generative and edifying experience of building relationships with front-line human rights advocates from around the world. Through them, I became newly aware of various human rights issues impacting people in Greenland, Albania, Turkey, South Sudan, Australia, India, and the Congo, among other locations. I helped to arrange visits with various human rights institutions and organizations with the cohort in both New York and Washington, D.C., and to support them in building

international networks and solidarities. These advocates embodied courage and commitment that showed me the meaning of enacting the principles of human rights I was learning about in my classes in their daily lives. It also emphasized the stakes of this kind of work, as many advocates took considerable risks to advance their causes in dangerous contexts. Encountering these advocates' stories helped to foster one of my central areas of scholarly interest that continues to animate my research to this day: how people translate their visions of a better world into action and create their own forms of justice within their communities.

These lessons I was learning from the advocates themselves resonated with my academic studies at Columbia. I was lucky enough to take courses with Professors Elsa Stamatapoulou, Audra Simpson, and Lila Abu-Lughod, all of whom had a tremendous influence on my development as a critical thinker and ethnographic researcher. It was in these classes that I learned of the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people (MMIWG2S) for the first time, catalyzing my subsequent graduate research. I conducted fieldwork in Nova Scotia and Winnipeg in 2015 for my M.A. thesis, "Already Disappeared: Interrogating the Right to Life of Indigenous Women in Canada."

I then went on to continue my graduate education at the University of Minnesota, under the guidance of

my advisors and committee members Hoon Song, Jean O'Brien, Jean Langford, and Juliana Hu Pegues. Between 2017-2020, I conducted additional stints of ethnographic fieldwork in Winnipeg with MMIWG2S advocates, Indigenous doulas and midwives, water walkers, and artists. When my research was interrupted by the pandemic, I returned to the U.S. and, like many others in my graduate cohort, adapted to conducting "virtual ethnography" through online interviews and attending online events for the next two years. In June 2023, I defended my dissertation, "Carrying Water: Indigenous Women Reclaiming Birthing Sovereignty along the Red River" and graduated with my Ph.D. in anthropology with a graduate minor in American Indian and Indigenous Studies.

Only two weeks after defending my dissertation, my husband and I stuffed our car to the brim with boxes of books, clothes, a bouquet of lavender from our neighbor, a guitar, and our 1-year-old son Leo. We drove from New Hampshire, where we'd been based at Dartmouth College, to East Lansing, where we both began new jobs as professors at Michigan State University. I am currently teaching here in the Department of Anthropology and affiliated with the Center for Gender in Global Context.

I am so grateful for my formative experience with HRAP and think of everyone there often. I hope to reconnect with the HRAP staff and 2015 advocates again one day soon.

“ These advocates embodied courage and commitment that showed me the meaning of enacting the principles of human rights I was learning about in my classes in their daily lives. ”



Jaclyn Sawyer worked with 2013 Advocate Sylvester Uhaa (right corner) on getting books to prisons in Nigeria.

We learned from each other's experiences in New York and Nigeria, and went on to develop a project to support Sylvester's work at home and establish libraries and educational programs within Nigerian prisons.

Together, we facilitated the delivery of 22,000 books to Nigerian prisons, and developed methods to measure the impact of educational programming within prisons on recidivism rates and positive reintegration outcomes. Despite some hurdles along the way, the project progressed from planning to execution, laying the groundwork for educational initiatives within the prison system. This project still inspires me in the power of finding shared goals in work executed across cultures and circumstances, and the power of building these relationships to bring capacity to the collective work and strengthen grassroots efforts.

Since that work in 2014, I have forged my career in building data capacities in human rights and social justice endeavors. I have helped numerous non-profits learn what data they have and the stories it holds, exploring how they can leverage small data in thoughtful ways to further their mission. I have stayed connected to higher education institutions to cultivate these spaces where people and ideas come together to develop novel, shared solutions that

can't be developed alone. As a lecturer at Columbia University, School of Social Work I developed a course called Advocacy in Emerging Tech, Media, and Society that prepares students across disciplines to leverage their skills in the emerging tech landscape and engage with the pressing issues of human rights in the digital age. In this capacity, I've been able to stay connected to the HRAP program year after year, meeting the new cohorts and hosting workshops on data-based advocacy.

In the digital age, human rights advocacy is undergoing a profound transformation, as technology shapes both the challenges and opportunities for activists. I am thrilled to continue to be connected to HRAP and be able to explore new tools and approaches with advocates and learn how the work is adapting in new environments. There is an urgent need for collaboration between technologists, policymakers, and civil society to uphold human rights in the digital realm and HRAP has provided an inspiring avenue for initiating these connections and collaborations, strengthening and upholding practitioner networks across the globe.

Jaclyn is the Associate Vice President of Data Strategy at Breaking Ground and a Lecturer at the Columbia School of Social Work.

JACLYN SAWYER

MSW, Social Work and Policy Practice, 2015
COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

I first learned of the Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) in 2013 when I was a graduate student and one of the few lucky Americans living at International House. I was studying public policy and social work at Columbia University, and part of an incredible community of graduate students from

across the world, areas of study, and educational institutions. That year I had the privilege of getting to know a cohort of human rights advocates, finding inspiration and overlap in our collective advocacy work. One of the advocates, Sylvester Uhaa, and I found particular resonance in each other's work, both dedicated to justice reform. We found common cause in our efforts to promote the dignity and humanity of anyone interacting with justice systems and advocacy to reduce the incarcerated population.

“ This project still inspires me in the power of finding shared goals in work executed across cultures and circumstances, and the power of building these relationships to bring capacity to the collective work and strengthen grassroots efforts. ”



Nicholas Anthony Perez with members of the 2018 HRAP.

NICHOLAS ANTHONY PEREZ

MA in Human Rights and Humanitarian Policy, 2018
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Imagine applying to “work study” positions expecting an ordinary office job, and then discovering the most catalytic opportunity ever. What other “work study” job allows a grad student in human rights policy to work alongside grassroots advocates from around the world by helping them navigate and network with over 100 global human rights organizations? The Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) bolstered by Stephanie Grepo’s inspired leadership radiates such progressive magic despite such challenging times, and I can confidently say that my time there between 2018 and 2019 supercharged my career in ways I would have never envisioned possible.

During my time working with Stephanie and HRAP, my main responsibilities included facilitating strategic networking coordination between the

resident advocates and human rights agencies across New York City and Washington, D.C. Every day I would oversee communications with dozens of organizations that the advocates had demonstrated interest in connecting with, including United Nations agencies, nonprofit advocacy groups, and donor foundations. I would schedule networking meetings for the advocates to visit these organizations in person, and then I would have the opportunity to visit the sites alongside the cohort to observe real-world human rights advocacy and dialogue taking place. As a student in Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs, it was one thing to study human rights issues and principles in class, and another thing entirely to actually visit the agencies themselves alongside real changemakers who were there to have serious conversations of impact and consequences. Immersing myself in this real-world advocacy enabled me to grasp the nuances and intricacies of the field firsthand, making my academic studies feel all the more tangible.

Beyond the highly practical networking skills I learned during my time with HRAP, Stephanie also encouraged me to enjoy the work by exploring and integrating my passions for graphic design, photography, videography, and copyediting. One of my favorite projects was drafting a Networking Coordination Manual for future work-study students to advise on best practices when coordinating and maintaining outreach to human rights organizations. I designed the entire doc on Canva using explanatory screenshots, photos, and brightly colored clip art that continues to provide useful advice even to this day. Additionally, Stephanie also asked me to create the 30th Annual Alumni Survey Report which I also designed on Canva in order to embed ample photos and add colorful survey result charts and graphics that could hopefully do justice to the immense energy and impact brought to the program through the various advocates that have participated over the years. Seeing that I had an eye for design, Stephanie also invited me to be the advocates’ official photographer, which led to all of us having way too much fun taking prom-style group photos in front of Low Library, and individual power shots in front of Butler Library that still adorn many of the advocates’ LinkedIn profiles today. Lastly, I was also able to return to HRAP after graduating to interview a new cohort of advocates on video and then provide edited sequences for YouTube that the advocates and Program could use. That project was also such a joy to create, as I was able to meet and converse with

the advocates directly, molding their responses into captivating videos that would be used to amplify their inspiring stories and missions.

The experiences and skills gained during my time working with Stephanie and the advocates remain invaluable in my current role as the Program Manager for Free Expression and Education at PEN America. At PEN America, I spearhead human rights advocacy education programs, focusing on freedom of expression, for high school and college students. I have invited many HRAP alumni to come and speak to our students including Solomon Collins Nkulinga, Daniel Alejandro Pinilla, Bakary Tandia and others. My networking skills also now come in handy tremendously as I build and promote courses and summer programs for students, making me always reflect on my time reaching out to organizations for HRAP. Furthermore, I always try to have fun with my work as I did while supporting HRAP, embracing my passions for design, content creation, and relationship-building. I’m deeply grateful to Stephanie and the Institute for the Study of Human Rights for jump-starting my career in human rights advocacy, and I eagerly anticipate meeting new advocates and witnessing the continued growth and impact of the program!

Niko is the Program Manager of Free Expression and Education at PEN America.

“As a student in Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs, it was one thing to study human rights issues and principles in class, and another thing entirely to actually visit the agencies themselves alongside real changemakers who were there to have serious conversations of impact and consequences.”



VICTOR JANDRES RIVERA

BA, Human Rights and Ethnicity and Race Studies, 2024
COLUMBIA COLLEGE

I applied to become a Human Rights Advocates Program assistant during my junior year of undergrad. As a human rights and ethnicity and race studies double major, I jumped at the opportunity to engage with the human rights activists that the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) invites from around the world. Now that I am one month away from graduating, I am happy I made that leap and applied to work with Stephanie Grepo on HRAP. The past two years working for HRAP have been informative and inspiring beyond what I could've imagined when I decided to work for ISHR. My work has allowed me to engage with human rights activists fighting for LGBTQ+ rights in Brazil, women's rights in Kenya, racial justice and civil rights in the Dominican Republic, disability rights in Nepal, and numerous other human rights efforts across the globe. My human rights courses have taught me about human rights mechanisms and theories, but my work with HRAP has exposed me to countless intersectional and grass-roots human rights initiatives that have inspired me to continue pursuing human rights work.

Working one-on-one with the advocates has been an invaluable experience, and I have felt immensely privileged to have had the opportunity to meet each and every one of the HRAP members these past two years. I've learned what it means to be a human rights defender and the importance of coalition-building and fighting to forge a better future where human rights are universally respected across the world. Next year, I will attend Yale Law School in pursuit of becoming a lawyer and hope to continue advocating for human rights after my time at Columbia comes to an end.

HRAP ALUMNI COMMITTEE

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University established the Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) Alumni Committee. The Committee is charged with identifying and exploring new funding possibilities for HRAP, increasing the visibility of the program, and reaching out to the HRAP alumni community throughout 2024 as HRAP marks its 35th anniversary. The chair of the committee, Nazibrola Janezashvili, said "I am proud to give back to HRAP as the inaugural chairperson of the alumni committee. The program contributed immensely to my growth as a human rights advocate. Before the program, I was supporting the development of human rights in background roles. My confidence increased tremendously thanks to HRAP. When I returned to Georgia, I joined the Unity of Judges of Georgia as executive director, served on the High Council of Justice in Georgia and more recently founded Georgian Court Watch. I want to make sure that HRAP can continue to do this for other advocates for the next 35 years."

THE MEMBERS OF THE INAUGURAL HRAP ALUMNI COMMITTEE ARE:

Nazibrola Janezashvili is a founder and director of Georgian Court Watch. She is a former non-judge member of the High Council of Justice of Georgia elected by the Parliament of Georgia in 2017. She has worked at different NGOs focusing on human rights and the judicial system. In 2016-2017 Nazi participated in the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship program and studied at Montana University and American University College of Law. Before that, in 2008, Nazi received the Lane Kirkland Scholarship and studied law at the University of Warsaw. In 2009, she attended HRAP.. She is the chair of the HRAP Alumni Committee.

Twesigye Jackson Kaguri is the founder of Nyaka Inc., a nonprofit organization he created in 2001 to tackle systemic inequalities, poverty, and hunger in his village of Nyakagyezi in southwest Uganda. Jackson has raised over \$150 million for Nyaka to provide free education and healthcare to 86,000 AIDS orphans and vulnerable children. To foster sustainable economic empowerment, Nyaka provides micro-loans and entrepreneurial training for the 20,000 grandmothers who look after the children. He is a board member of Global Giving, an international award winner and author of seven books, has been named CNN Hero of the Year, Heifer Hero, Global Citizen, and Power of One by Time Magazine. Jackson attended the 1996 HRAP.

Karyn Kaplan is an independent health and human rights consultant based in Bangkok. Karyn has 30 years' global experience working with grassroots activists on HIV and hepatitis C treatment access, drug policy and harm reduction, decriminalization and other human rights issues facing marginalized and criminalized populations, such as people who use drugs, sex workers, and LGBTQI people.

Karyn's previous positions include: Executive Director at Asia Catalyst (2016-2022), Director of International Hepatitis/HIV Policy and Advocacy at Treatment Action Group (TAG) (2012-2016), and co-founder/Director of Policy and Development at the Thai AIDS Treatment Action Group (TTAG) (2001-2013). She also worked at International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC, now OutRight International) and Gay Men's Health Crisis. Karyn is a recipient of the Health GAP Founders' Award and the John M. Lloyd Foundation HIV/AIDS Leadership Award (with TTAG co-founder, Paisan Suwannawong). Karyn attended the 2009 HRAP.

Samuel Matsikure is a self-identifying gay man from Zimbabwe. He is a human rights activist, community development practitioner and social change maker. He has more than 20 years of experience promoting and

defending the rights of LGBTIQ persons in Zimbabwe and Africa working for GALZ, an association of LGBTI people in Zimbabwe. He recently joined Aidsfonds, a Dutch funding organization as Team Lead for Key Populations in the international department.

He is a holder of a master's degree in Human Rights, Peace and Development with Africa University, Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Sociology and Gender Development from Woman's University in Africa, a Diploma in Systemic Family Therapy with Zimbabwe Institute of Systemic Therapy and a Diploma in Education (Secondary Level) with Mutare Teachers' College, an associate of University of Zimbabwe.

He was recognized by a South African publication Exit Magazine as a Queer Warrior in 2022 for his accomplishments in fighting for LGBTQIA rights in Zimbabwe. He was a recent recipient of the Africa Feather of the Year Award 2023 bestowed by South Africa Feather Awards for his impact as an advocate. He was inducted in the African GBMSM (Gay, Bisexual, Men who have Sex with Men) Hall of Fame, in recognition of his outstanding contributions as an African gay activist, his tireless efforts and dedication to advocating for rights and well-being for the LGBTIQ and GBMSM community in Africa and beyond by Global Gay Men Connect. Samuel attended the 2016 HRAP.

Miriam Ruiz Mendoza has more than 25 years of experience in journalism, research, project management, and volunteering, She is a passionate communication consultant for health, human rights, and gender issues who has worked with international organizations including the AIDS Healthcare Foundation to design and implement HIV prevention and advocacy strategies throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. She attended the 2006 HRAP.

Stephanie V. Grepo is the Director of Capacity Building at ISHR.

“ I hope to continue advocating for human rights after my time at Columbia comes to an end. ”

11

WITH GRATITUDE TO DR. THEODORUS G. SANDFORT

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights wishes to thank Dr. Theodorus G. Sandfort of the Mailman School of Public Health for his contributions to the development of HRAP participants over the years. Dr. Sandfort—aka Dr. Theo—is the longest-serving faculty mentor in HRAP’s history, having mentored the overwhelming majority of LGBTQI+ advocates since 2011.

Dr. Theo set aside time every week of the program to meet with the advocates at his office. He guided the advocates in thinking about their future academic studies, their well being, and their organizations’ research agendas. During his travels to Africa to conduct his own research, Dr. Theo set aside time to meet with the advocates he had mentored while they were in HRAP.

2016 Advocate Jeffrey Wambaya said that when Dr. Theo visited him and his colleagues at ISHTAR-MSM, he gave them books that he had carried from his office in NYC. Jeffrey recalled that before he met Dr. Theo, ISHTAR-MSM didn’t know how to conduct research. With Dr. Theo’s guidance, Jeffrey said that research is now a regular part of the organization’s work.

Wisdom Bebli of the 2019 HRAP fondly remembers his mentor: “Dr Theo has been a wonderful and amazing mentor. I wish he would long continue to mentor great advocates and activists from Africa. Dr. Theo doesn’t only mentor individual advocates—he mentors their entire organizations and the communities that they work in. After their HRAP participation, he will plan a research trip to your country that will inform policies and strategic decision making in your country/field of work. As part of the faculty mentorship in HRAP, Dr. Theo organized additional networking for his mentees as well as fun excursions in NYC. He always made sure we had some fun in addition to our work. I am where I am today because of Dr. Theo’s mentorship. I appreciate him so much. Medaase, Dr. Theo!”

2014 Advocate Esther Adhiambo said the following about Dr. Theo: “What a great human being who was patient with me as he took me through the basic principles of research. I would ask him the same question tens of times and he would still answer me without feeling that I was either bothering him or I was just not interested. Theo cared for me as a guardian and not just a mentor. It was my first time being away from home for a long time and he ensured I didn’t miss it much as he was not just my mentor but also a friend. Thank you for all the contributions you have made to the worldwide LGBT+ movement through all the activists you mentored. Your impact is surely being felt in all corners of the world. We love you and wish you all the love and care you may need.”

Upon “graduating” from HRAP, Dr. Theo said, “I am looking back at having made connections with impressive young advocates. It has been interesting to learn from them!” While he is no longer mentoring advocates, Dr. Theo remains a cherished member of the HRAP family. Thank you, Dr. Theo!

THE FOLLOWING ADVOCATES BENEFITED FROM DR. THEO’S MENTORSHIP:

- 2011 Advocate Ifeanyi Orazulike, Nigeria
- 2014 Advocate Esther Adhiambo, Kenya
- 2015 Advocate Elvis Hoxhaj, Albania
- 2016 Advocate Jeffrey Wambaya, Kenya
- 2016 Advocate Samuel Matsikure, Zimbabwe
- 2016 Advocate Mulshid Muwonge, Uganda
- 2017 Advocate Star Rugori, Burundi
- 2017 Advocate, Kenedy Abor Owiti, Kenya
- 2018 Advocate Pepe Onziema, Uganda
- 2019 Advocate Wisdom Kwame Bebli, Ghana
- 2019 Advocate Nkali Biggie, Uganda
- 2020–21 Advocate Ifanem Itoro Effiong, Nigeria
- 2020–21 Advocate Renae Green, Jamaica
- 2021–22 Advocate Dominique St. Vil, Haiti
- 2021–22 Advocate Daniel Villatoro, Guatemala
- 2022–23 Advocate Jade Jacobs-Wort, South Africa
- 2022–23 Advocate Anonymous

1. 2019 Advocate Wisdom Bebli recalls that Dr. Theo always made sure he and fellow advocate Nkali Biggie had some fun in addition to their work. 2. Dr. Theo with Wisdom Bebli and Nkali Biggie of the 2019 HRAP. 3. Dr. Theo met with 2016 Advocate Jeffrey Wambaya and Peter Njane of ISHTAR-MSM in February 2024 when they visited NYC. 4. Dr. Theo with 2018 Advocate Pepe Onziema of Uganda. 5. Dr. Theo and 2014 Advocate Esther Adhiambo of Kenya. 6. The first advocate to be mentored by Dr. Theo was Ifeanyi Orazulike of the 2011 HRAP.



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IN MEMORIAM: J. PAUL MARTIN



The 1996 cohort with J. Paul Martin.

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights mourns the death on January 7, 2024, of J. Paul Martin who, with Professor of Law and University Professor Louis Henkin, created the Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) at Columbia University in 1978. Along with colleagues Arthur Danto and Mitchell Ginsberg, Paul and Lou pioneered the study of human rights as an interdisciplinary field that not only involved multiple forms of practice—from law to public health, journalism to advocacy—but also engaged directly with the humanities and the social sciences. The first of its kind, the Center—later Institute—that they founded flourished and now runs a popular undergraduate major and a Master of Arts program. Paul led in developing the Institute’s curricular programs, compiled numerous resource materials on human rights, and served as a devoted classroom teacher and thesis advisor to scores of students.

Paul initiated the flagship Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP), now in its 35th year with more than 350 alumni engaged in human rights work around the globe. At the memorial gathering held at St. Paul’s Chapel on the Columbia campus in late April, 1996 Advocate Twesigye Jackson Kaguri of Uganda spoke on behalf of HRAP alumni everywhere. He said:

“I am one of 350 advocates who benefited from Paul’s vision and guidance. We thank Paul. Without him, the work we have around the world would not have been possible.” He continued, “Paul challenged me....I started a school in my village for children whose families were impacted by HIV/AIDS. 120,000 children are now able to live with 23,000 women with shelter, food, schooling and hospitals because Paul pushed me.” He said that whenever he called Paul to “rumble and complain,” Paul would always advise him to “write it all down.” Jackson has since authored seven books. He recalled that he had sent every single book to Paul who never failed to respond. Jackson said that he will send his eighth soon-to-be-published book “to the same address—only this time it will be in my spirit and [in honor of] the legacy of Paul that lives in my village.”

After 29 years serving as founding director of CSHR, Paul became the Director of the Human Rights Program at Barnard College until his retirement. In recent years he served as a member of the ISHR steering committee, where he always thought about the big picture and the long term, persistently advocating for students.

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Your donation will make it possible for more human rights advocates to attend HRAP.





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