

Human Rights Advocates Program

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN RIGHTS
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2021–22 Report





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Introduction

The 2021–22 Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) marked the 33rd iteration of the program—and its first time in a hybrid format. 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 Dominique St. Vil 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 campaigns.

346 advocates from 93 countries have participated in HRAP since 1989. The cumulative reach of HRAP participants is extraordinary: alumni have worked with organizations whose memberships range from the hundreds to the millions. They can be found at prominent human rights organizations, serving in their national governments and at the UN, and teaching at universities around the globe.

The 2021–22 cohort included 12 advocates from as many countries working on issues including LGBTQI+ rights, migration, the rule of law, Indigenous peoples' rights, trauma, disability rights, youth development, and capacity building.

Building upon lessons learned during the previous program when the pandemic prevented the 2020–21 advocates from traveling to Columbia University for the program, the 2021–22 cohort attended skill-based workshops online on a weekly basis over the fall semester. They traveled to NYC in January to participate in courses and to engage with the Columbia University community during the spring semester. Throughout the entire program, they networked with organizations and participated in speaking engagements and conferences both on- and off-campus.



As someone who has lived through the prejudices of others because of how different I am, I want to change the way people see such differences in others—perhaps change it in such a way that they feel empowered by those differences instead of feeling threatened by them.

DOMINIQUE ST. VIL, Executive and Administrative Director, Organisation Trans d'Haiti (OTRAH), Haiti

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The Advocates In Their Own Words



Aminatu S. Gambo

Program Coordinator, Political Participation and Advocacy

Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas—International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI-IIWF)

CAMEROON


The reason why I became a human rights advocate can be traced to my personal life experience coupled with my identity as an Indigenous Mbororo-Fulani woman. I grew up in a small Indigenous community. Very patriarchal in nature, our culture and religion places barriers, particularly on women and girls, when it comes to basic human rights. In most cases, house work, caring for children, and cooking fall to women and girls—and often keeps them out of school. I was very fortunate to be educated. I was one of three Mbororo girls who received a scholarship from the Cameroon Association of University Women. With this opportunity I was able to graduate from high school. I understood that education plays a major role in addressing poverty, achieving a better standard of living and well-being, attaining improvements in health and income, and enjoying a greater degree of freedom and power over my life. This was my motivation to pursue higher level of education.

Even with the opportunity to study, I experienced a lot of setbacks as an Indigenous woman while trying to enroll in the university because of the cultural expectation and family pressure for girls to marry and start a family. While at the University, I majored in international law and worked as a volunteer with a grassroots organization in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. My work focused on Indigenous peoples and local communities where I raised awareness about women’s rights through trainings on the existing national, regional, and international human rights instruments. The more I engaged with these activities,

the more I realized that Indigenous women globally face multiple forms of historic discrimination that expose them to human rights violations in every aspect of their daily lives: including their civil and political rights, their right of access to justice, economic, social and cultural rights, and their right to live free from violence. With all of these, I knew I had to do something in order to be able to influence the laws and policies that will enforce compliance at every level.

To further my impact, I improved my knowledge and skills in human rights advocacy by attending the FIMI-IIWF Global Leadership School in 2013 and also the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Indigenous Fellowship Program in 2015. The trainings deepened my motivation and desire to advocate and promote Indigenous women’s rights and also led me to my current role with FIMI-IIWF as the program coordinator for political participation and advocacy.

Through my experience and knowledge, I continue to protect and advance the fundamental principles of human rights for Indigenous women and girls. I also believe that achieving gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination against Indigenous women and girls requires a collective approach and a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which they experience discrimination.



The more I engaged with these activities, the more I realized that Indigenous women globally face multiple forms of historic discrimination that expose them to human rights violations in every aspect of their daily lives.

Aminatu S. Gambo

FACULTY MENTORS

Yuusuf Caruso, PhD
African Studies Librarian,
Columbia University Libraries

Sara Sinclair
Adjunct Faculty, Indigenous Oral
Traditions and Anti-Colonial Oral
Histories, Oral History Master of Arts,
Columbia University

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Decolonizing Global Health: On the
Limits and Possibilities of Human Rights
Advocacy, Mailman School of Public
Health

Human Rights Panel, George Clement
Bond Center for African Education,
Teachers College

CLASSES

- Gender Justice
- Gender-based Violence Against Women
- International Humanitarian Law

NETWORKING

- Amnesty International-USA
- Candid
- Global Mental Health Lab,
Teachers College
- Human Rights Watch
- The Inspection Panel, The World Bank
- National Endowment for Democracy
- PEN America
- RFK Human Rights
- StoryCorps
- Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission,
U.S. Congress
- United Nations Development Program
- U.S. Department of State
- United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS



Aminatu, Ritu and Elvira attended HRAP with the support of FIMI-IIWF.

Daniel Alejandro Pinilla

Director of Communications for the Americas
Center for Justice and International Law
COLOMBIA

When I was a child, Colombia was suffering the worst time of the war involving the government, far-right paramilitary groups, and the far-left guerrilla group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). My idea of pacifist democracy and human rights was framed by its vulnerability amidst violence, repression, persecution, poverty and inequality. Friends I grew up with were affected by the conflict too. In Colombia these kind of situations were normalized after 50 years of combat. Information, truth, and hope seemed to be scarce. With the absence of truth and information, I felt compelled to become involved. I decided to go to college to study Social Communication and Journalism looking for answers and questions to write stories that covered multiple angles, and to start my advocacy path. I decided to advocate for rights because I had a voice that could be amplified with training and joined the Journalism school. I did it because I could.

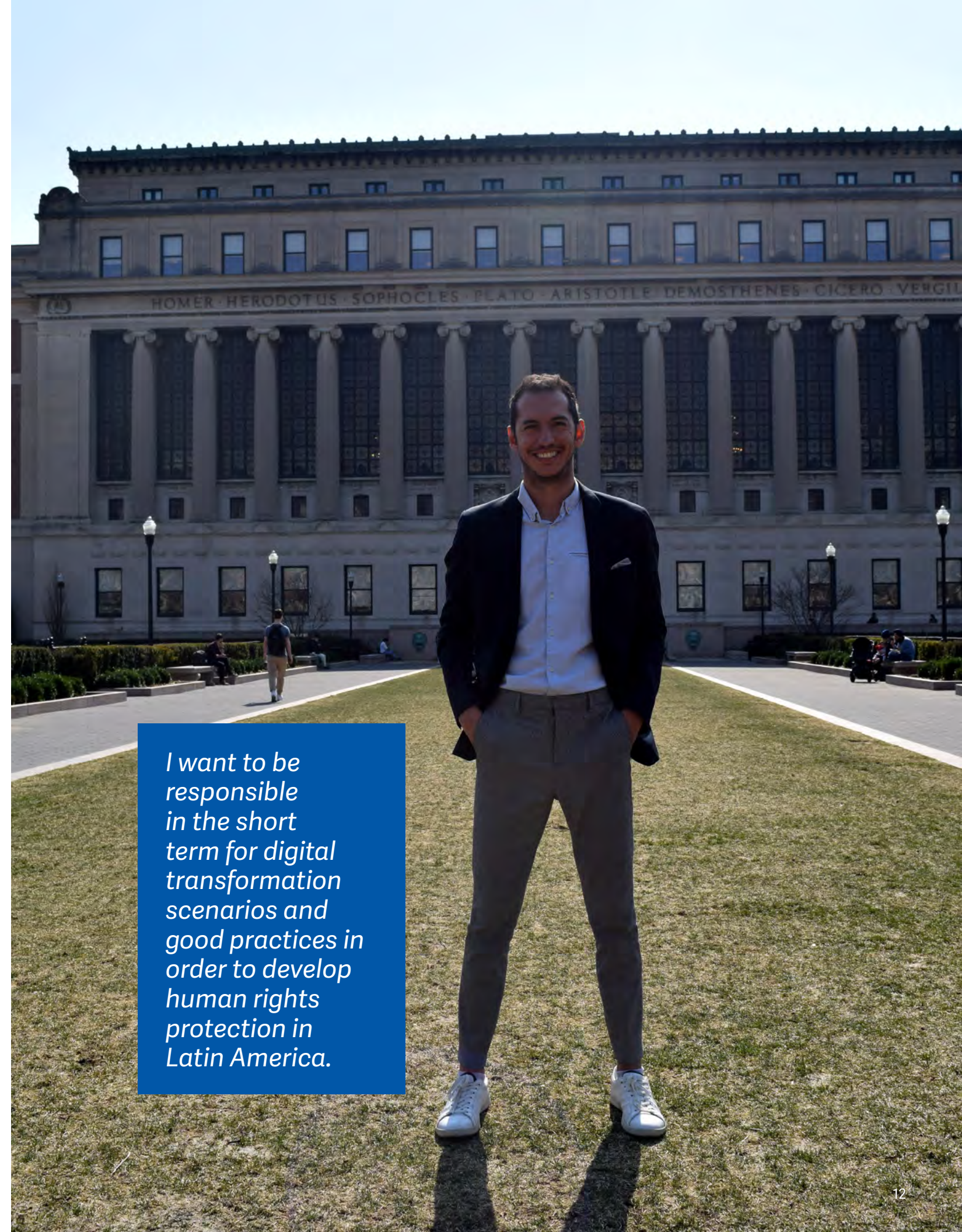
My experience from the city where I grew up made me dream of different places that the world should be full of. Peaceful places not discovered yet by human rights defenders, places where we all can enjoy our liberties and rights. This thought focused my professional career on the promotion of human rights and to look for those places. I have been looking for organizations, people, and opportunities to address my skills in order to defend rights and promote the rule of law. I deeply believe that in Latin America, but also globally, there is an opportunity to foster more equality and democratic societies. I became an advocate understanding that as a journalist I would use communications, media, and technologies to connect law and people through citizens' speech, but as human being

protecting human rights and finding new partners along the way with similar purposes from different disciplinary traditions.

Many citizens in our towns and cities are waiting for more opportunities and support. At the same time, a lot of national authorities and international organizations could strengthen their cooperation, thereby having a greater impact with their interventions. With my passion as advocate and curiosity as human being, I wanted to work as a bridge for many of them. This is why I have been defending human rights during the last nine years, proposing changes in the imaginaries and new narratives for its protection. I do this from different approaches such as arts and technology.

My advocacy path seeks a future where people from different disciplines and nationalities can contribute to the promotion of human rights in their countries and organizations. I enjoy experimenting with the power of technology and artistic methods to integrate human rights advocacy, opportunities to have access to justice, platforms to understand and know several communities, and their needs for easy action to support them.

As a journalist I hope to keep using information, the media, and creative approaches to connect people with initiatives and them with key actors. I want to be responsible in the short term for digital transformation scenarios and good practices in order to develop human rights protection in Latin America. Being an advocate has been not only the best choice to protect fundamental rights, but also to learn from people with inspiring visions of the world that we are creating every day.



I want to be responsible in the short term for digital transformation scenarios and good practices in order to develop human rights protection in Latin America.

Daniel Alejandro Pinilla

FACULTY MENTORS

Anya Schiffrin

Senior Lecturer in Discipline of International and Public Affairs, School of International and Public Affairs

John Marshall

Assistant Professor of Political Science, Department of Political Science

CLASSES

Media Campaigning and Social Change

Storytelling for Social Change

Video as Inquiry

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Candid

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Exploring the Relationship between The Arts and Human Rights, ISHR and the Institute for Latin American Studies

Free Speech Live, Freedom of Expression in Latin America, PEN America

Key Press Freedom Principles: Independence, Impartiality, and Integrity, Global Press Freedom Advocacy Institute, PEN America

Human Rights in Latin America: Perspectives from Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela, ISHR and the Institute for Latin American Studies

Human Rights Issues in Latin America Through Education, Teachers College and Institute for Latin American Studies

Voices from the Frontlines of Human Rights, Introduction to Human Rights, ISHR

Exploring the relation between the Arts and human rights

April 7, 2022 - 12 pm ET

This panel seeks to promote a dialogue to articulate and debate essential questions about the relationship between arts and human rights, discuss models of collaboration between arts and human rights actors, and explore the role arts may play to restrain or violate rights, and how to tackle such concerns.

RUTI TEITEL
Ernst C. Steifel Professor of Comparative Law at New York Law School, Co-Director of the Center for International Law, and Director of the Institute for Global Law, Justice, and Policy

FRANCES NEGRON-MUNTANER
M.A. in Visual Anthropology and Masters in Fine Arts, Temple; Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, Rutgers. Frances Negron-Muntaner is an award-winning filmmaker, writer, and scholar. She is the recipient of Ford, Truman, Scroggs Howard, Rockefeller, and Pew fellowships as well as a Social Science Research Council and Andy Warhol Foundation grants.

DANIEL ALEJANDRO PINILLA
2021-22 Advocate and Director of Communications for the Americas at the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

LUIS CORZO
A Brooklyn based multidisciplinary artist, he received his BFA in Photography and Contemporary Creation at ISEP, Barcelona in 2012. He works using the different disciplines of photography, but also with video to explore the obscurities of human activity and the space in which we inhabit

For Zoom login, please register here: <https://bit.ly/HRAP-Arts>



The 2021-22 Advocates enjoyed both cold and warm weather during the semester.

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN LATIN AMERICA THROUGH EDUCATION

A two-day virtual conference
Part of the Americas Dialogue on Education Policy initiative of the Institute of Latin American Studies, Columbia University

PANEL 1
REGIONAL APPROACHES TO HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH EDUCATION
March 1, 2022 from 3 pm to 4:30 pm EST

DANIEL PINILLA
Director of Communications for the Americas, Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIS)

CECILIA RAMÍREZ
Global Leadership School Coordinator, International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIWF)

GINA ROMERO
Executive Director, Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy (REDLAD)

CHAIR: DANIEL FRIEDRICH
Associate Professor of Curriculum at Teachers College, Columbia University

DISCUSSANT: FELISA TIBBITTS
Chair in Human Rights Education at Utrecht University, and Lecturer at Teachers College, Columbia University

Latin & Latin American Faculty Working Group
TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ISHR

Daniel Villatoro

Coordinator

Latin American LGBTI Journalism Initiative

GUATEMALA

I started my career as a journalist. To me, that is such a privileged position because you have the opportunity to see the world in all its contrasts: you interview people that are making change and criminals that have contributed to genocide; you see the worst human rights violations, talk to the victims, and are in close contact with the politicians who are defining how policies will affect them. After seeing all this, it was hard for me not to have ideas for action—not to “act up”—when I saw harm and discrimination happening.

On a more personal level, I started to cover the issues that affect people like me. I grew up in a small town with a conservative family, and I’m gay. It was hard for me to access knowledge about sexual diversity, but it was also hard to live in a country where we are not accepted and, at times, are even criminalized or portrayed as criminals or as a disease.

I knew I needed to engage and participate in the change that I wanted to see in my country. I started publishing on these issues, reporting on them, interviewing social leaders, and understanding how this affected not just my journalistic environment, but society as a whole—our culture, our institutions, our policies, our entertainment, and our beliefs.

I saw how other LGBTIQ+ social leaders started to address the issue and organized. I joined that space and started to put all my skills at the service of one goal: a Guatemala where LGBTIQ+ people can be free to be who

they are. It was a big career change for me but I thought it was needed. So I started to do more advocacy, more campaigning. I designed projects and contributed not only to the growth of my organization but to the growth of the overall movement. Then I found other spaces where I could use my influence for change to happen. Although law and development aren’t topics I studied, I knew I had to learn them to reach this goal. A lot of spaces have to change. A lot of skills, minds and resources are needed for this to happen.

I became a social leader because I wanted young people not to face the fear of discrimination and rejection I felt growing up. Now, I see some change. Even though the power structures of my country haven’t changed much, I now know more about how laws and policies allow for this discrimination to continue. I now have a better understanding not just of my reality and life experience, but also about how this discrimination affects people with other sexual orientations and gender identities. I even managed to lead the discussion for more inclusive reporting from media across the Latin American region. I remember when I wanted to leave my country because life as a gay man there wasn’t what I wanted for me and how participating, building with others, and working towards that goal of a different society, more just, more equitable, more inclusive, gave meaning to my work. I work in human rights because I want all these things that a lot of people see only in their dreams to be their daily life, just another day.



I joined that space and started to put all my skills at the service of one goal: a Guatemala where LGBTIQ+ people can be free to be who they are.

Daniel Villatoro

FACULTY MENTOR

Dr. Theodorus Sandfort

Professor of Clinical Sociomedical Sciences (in Psychiatry), Division of Gender Health and Sexuality, Department of Psychiatry

Research Scientist, HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, New York State Psychiatric Institute

CLASSES

Gender Justice

Transnational LGBTI Rights

Video as Inquiry

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Arcus

Candid

Human Rights Campaign

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

OutRight Action International

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

Washington Office on Latin America

WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

The Current State of LGBTQI+ Rights in Costa Rica, Barbados, Haiti & Guatemala, Human Rights Campaign and ISHR

Fall 2021 Global Free Expression Advocacy Institute, PEN America

Human Rights in Latin America: Perspectives from Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela, Institute for the Study of Human Rights and the Institute for Latin American Studies

LGBTQI+ Rights in Services: An Evaluation Framework, Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Humanitarian Settings, Mailman School of Public Health

Violence against LGBTI people— Continuities and Discontinuities of Violence in Latin America class, Yale University



Larissa Arroyo Navarrete

Founder

Asociacion Ciudadana ACCEDER

COSTA RICA

Although there are many paths to becoming a human rights advocate, mine was more than a path—it was the place where I was born. All the memories I have of my mother revolve around the need to recognize social inequalities and above all to act from solidarity as a maximum ethical value and to support anyone who needed it. My mother's empathy left its mark on me, and so without realizing it, I became an anti-establishment person, someone who always had to ask why I had to comply with the rules if they seemed unfair to me.

Many years passed until I discovered the magic of collective organizing and especially non-partisan politics. Once I understood that the madness of believing in the possibility of social change towards freedom and equality was not madness but a dream ready to become reality, there was no going back. It became a lifelong commitment and passion.

The question of why I became a human rights advocate has a resounding answer: because nothing else makes sense. Although intolerance of injustices and inequalities seems to come to me as an organic reaction, with even physical manifestations, it also took me a long time to train academically and professionally. I realized the significance of understanding that it was not about saving the whole world, but doing everything I could while preserving myself and having the ability to enjoy my life.

Without shame, and with great transparency, I like to reaffirm that one of the greatest challenges and achievements that I have had as a human rights advocate has not been exposing myself as well as those close to me, but understanding that empathizing with other people is insufficient to be able to carry out effective actions for social change. I have to set limits on how other people's pain affects me and recognize that being paralyzed by empathy, ego, and compassion without concrete actions has no meaning.

Even so, it is still hard for me not to feel the pain of the women I have defended, like Ana and Aurora, whose names I will never forget. Every time I tell their stories, I still find it hard to contain the tears and think more clearly so I can truly help them and all the rest of the women they represent. With every year that passes, I feel happier and prouder of this work which we have carried out and its results; from our differences and discontent in a group as diverse as that of human rights advocates, and in particular those of women's rights. It has been the sum of the actions, despite the political and strategic differences, that people near and far, present and past, dear and not so dear, have managed to get closer to what I have sometimes seen as a diffuse dream: freedom, equality, and dignity for all people from empathy and solidarity.



The question of why I became a human rights advocate has a resounding answer: because nothing else makes sense.

Larissa Arroyo Navarrete

FACULTY MENTOR

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

Professor of English and Comparative Literature

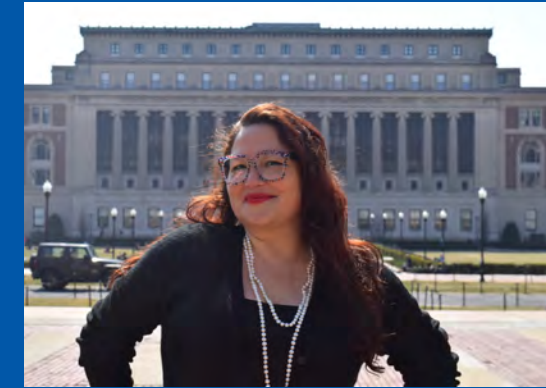
Founding Director of the Media and Idea Lab

Founding Curator of the Latino Arts and Activism Archive at Columbia's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

The Current State of LGBTQI+ Rights in Costa Rica, Barbados, Haiti & Guatemala, Human Rights Campaign and ISHR

Human Rights in Latin America: Perspectives from Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela, ISHR and the Institute for Latin American Studies.



CLASSES

Gender Justice

Transnational LGBTI Rights

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Candid

Global Philanthropy Project

Human Rights Campaign

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

OutRight Action International

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS



Dominique St. Vil

Executive and Administrative Director
Organisation Trans d’Haiti (OTRAH)
HAITI

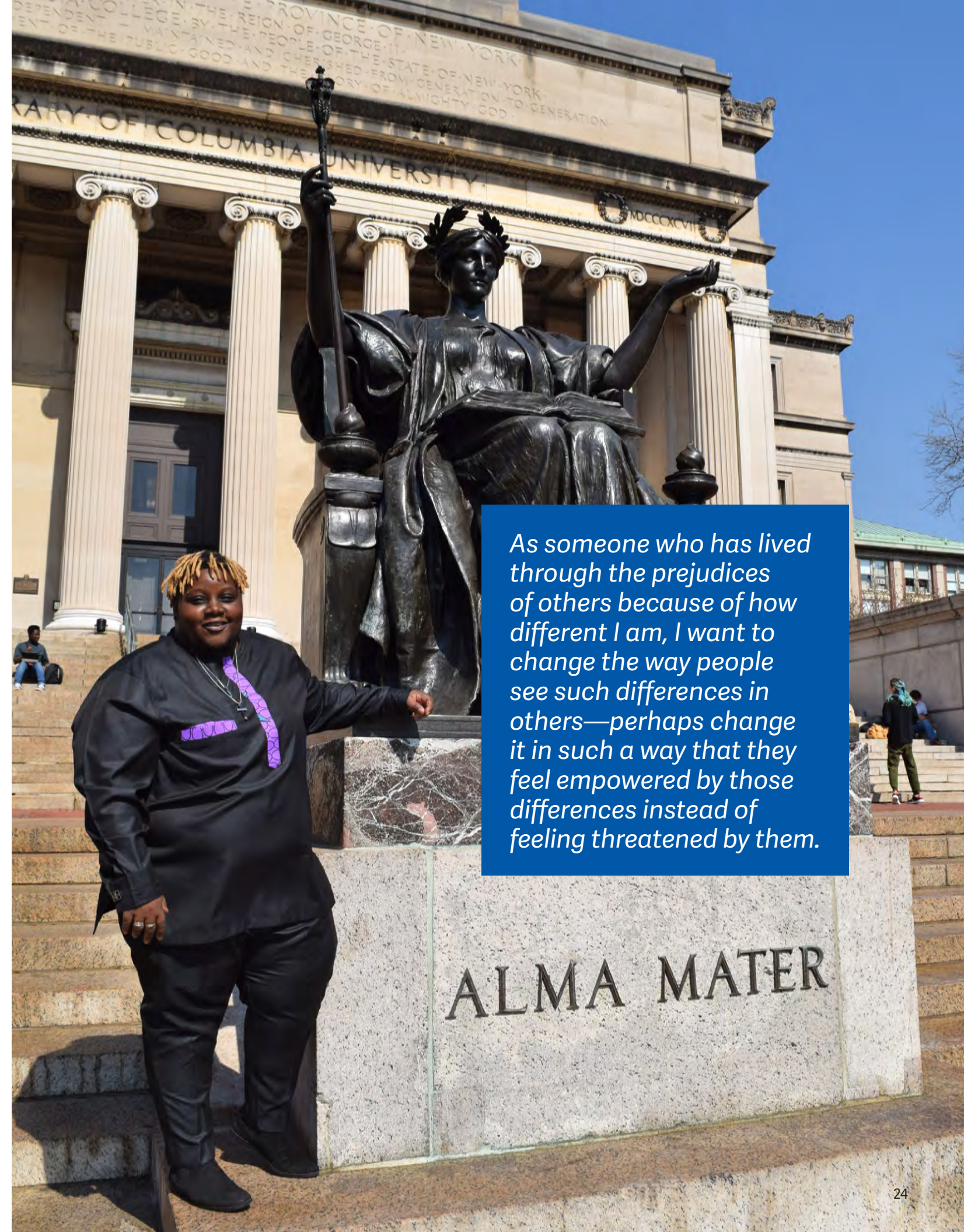
My legal name is Anne Eunice St Vil. I was born in 1985, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which is one of the biggest islands in the Caribbean. Today, I identify as a Transgender man. I prefer to be called Dominique. Dominique is the name I feel comfortable being called by because of my gender identity.

My journey as an activist has been quite difficult. I could talk about the many reasons—personal and general—that have brought me to this path. Becoming an advocate for human rights—specifically an advocate for LGBTQI+ peoples’ rights—was not really a choice. If it was a choice, it was not my choice but rather nature’s choice. Sexual orientation and gender identity for many years was not a subject people were aware of, especially in third world countries where poverty and social and economic issues are prioritized over other struggles. With no one to look up to—no role models at all—most people from the LGBTQI+ community in the Caribbean as well as in countries with similar backgrounds are lost and overwhelmed by solitude and identity crisis. It takes courage to live your truth in such circumstances.

As an individual, I wanted to overcome my struggles, not because I wanted to be seen as a Transgender person at first, but I wanted to be seen as a human being with the right to be recognized and valued as such. As a child and later as a young adult, I did everything by the book so that I could feel worthy. I worked hard in school and later in college. But nothing seemed to get me the love and recognition that I was seeking from my family, my peers at school or those in other spaces where I lived. I was always bullied and mistreated for my weight or my many differences. I will never forget the first time I saw a homophobic reaction. It changed my vision of life and

what I wanted to do. As someone who has lived through the prejudices of others because of how different I am, I want to change the way people see such differences in others—perhaps change it in such a way that they will feel empowered by that very difference instead of feeling threatened by it. People misjudge others for almost anything from skin color to size differences to cultural identity. Later, I learned the hard way, they also mistreat others for whom they fall in love with. Besides being a Transgender man, I am a female person living in a body that I do not like while I am very much attracted to those who carry that body with grace. The first time I expressed such love, my entire family stood against me. I didn’t understand their rejection. After facing such disappointment, I started to hide it for the sake of wanting to please my parents and others. My own parents didn’t want to have anything to do with me because I loved differently than what they are used to. While my trying to hide that part of me I found I couldn’t suppress it especially as I started putting forward my gender expression.

Throughout all of these situations, I’ve lived all alone with no one to turn to. I’ve realized that many young people in the community are facing the same struggles day in and day out with no one to turn to—no institutions that can support them or assist them. Looking back at all that I’ve faced and hearing from friends and peers who eventually lost their lives or were victims of assaults or were out on the streets or sleeping at friend’s house or those of them who were forced to make a living out of prostitution—not by choice—but because they had been forced to do so. I wanted to be that spark, that light, that support for them as I have always wished I had for myself.



As someone who has lived through the prejudices of others because of how different I am, I want to change the way people see such differences in others—perhaps change it in such a way that they feel empowered by those differences instead of feeling threatened by them.

Dominique St. Vil

FACULTY MENTOR

Dr. Theodorus Sandfort

Professor of Clinical Sociomedical Sciences (in Psychiatry), Division of Gender Health and Sexuality, Department of Psychiatry

Research Scientist, HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, New York State Psychiatric Institute

CLASSES

Gender Justice

Sexual and Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings

Transnational LGBTI Rights

Protection of Human Right in the Contemporary World

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Candid

Human Rights Campaign

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

OutRight Action International

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Black Excellence Panel, The Haitian Association of Students and the Black Organization of Students at Rutgers-Newark

The Current State of LGBTQI+ Rights in Costa Rica, Barbados, Haiti & Guatemala, Human Rights Campaign and ISHR

Decolonizing Global Health: On the Limits and Possibilities of Human Rights Advocacy, Mailman School of Public Health

Domestic Voices in the International Field: How NGOs, the HRC and Grassroots Organizations Can Collaborate on LGBTQIA+ Issues, International LGBTQI Rights: Bridging Activism from Grassroots to Global Organizations – Spring 2022 Symposium, Fordham Law

Gender Violence and Politics in Haiti

Voices from the Frontlines of Human Rights, Introduction to Human Rights, ISHR



Dominique, Ritu and Aminatu spoke at an event for students moderated by Kayum Ahmed.



Elvira Constantina Pablo Antonio

Policy and Member Engagement Officer for Latin America

Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage

MEXICO

I am a woman from the Ayuuk (Mixe) Indigenous people from Oaxaca, Mexico. I lived my childhood among the mountains of the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca. It was a happy childhood in a small town in contact with nature and away from the city. Since I was a child, I liked to dream about what I wanted to be when I grew up. In my adolescence, after migrating to the city of Oaxaca, it became clear.

Due to many factors, Indigenous women need to migrate and face a major culture shock as we find ourselves in an environment very different from the one in which we grew up. We arrive at a place where our language is not spoken and that often does not receive us in a good way. The experience of leaving my community of origin for the city of Oaxaca and later for Mexico City to attend public university made me reaffirm more and more the need to change the conditions of inequality, discrimination, violence, and barriers to exercising our rights that Indigenous women face.

At many points in my life, I have known lots of stories of Indigenous women from different communities who face discrimination and difficulties when seeking medical attention in health centers and hospitals, from not being able to receive care in their own language to being mistreated by the staff who work there to giving birth on the street because they could not receive care in time. I have also heard from girls and adolescents who do not

go to school or stop studying because they do not have economic resources, opportunities to access free public education or a support network.

Gender-based violence, femicides, unwanted pregnancies, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services, child marriage, and early unions are all serious issues that affect the lives of Indigenous girls, adolescents, youth, and women inside and outside the communities, as well as the lack of access to justice and protection mechanisms. In other cases, exercising the right to defend land and territories has cost the lives of Indigenous human rights defenders. We continue to face barriers to the exercise of political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

I am a human rights defender because of all of this. I am indignant about the injustices, violence, discrimination, racism, and lack of access to opportunities that women, youth, and Indigenous peoples face. I have learned from other wise Indigenous women that we can change this world and that we are the continuation and living history of the movements that our ancestors initiated. Today we continue to live and build collectively from our local, national, regional, and global spaces. We will continue to dream and create a better world in which all girls, adolescents, youth, women, and Indigenous peoples can fully exercise their rights and live with dignity and freedom.

I am indignant about the injustices, violence, discrimination, racism, and lack of access to opportunities that women, youth, and Indigenous peoples face.

Elvira Constantina Pablo Antonio

FACULTY MENTOR

Pamela Graham

Director, Humanities & Global Studies and Director, Center for Human Rights Documentation, Columbia University Libraries

CLASSES

Gender Justice

Human Rights and the Politics of Inequality

Indigenous Oral Traditions and Anti-Colonialism

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Candid

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Human Rights in Latin America: Perspectives from Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela, ISHR and the Institute for Latin American Studies

The Plight of Human Rights for Indigenous Women & Girls in Mexico, Leitner Center for International Law and Justice, Fordham Law School




Human Rights in Latin America: Perspectives from Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela

A conversation with participants in the Human Rights Advocates Program.

Moderated by **David Holiday**, Philanthropy and Policy Expert on Central America


MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022
12 PM - 1 PM ET




Daniel Alejandro Pinilla
Director of Communications for the Americas Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)
Colombia



Daniel Villatoro
Coordinator Latin American LGBTI Journalism Initiative
Guatemala



Mario D'Andrea
Lawyer Defiende Venezuela, Civilis Derechos Humanos, and Compromiso Compartido
Venezuela




Elvira Constantina Pablo Antonio
Policy and Member Engagement Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage
Mexico



Larissa Arroyo Navarrete
Founder, Asociación Ciudadana ACCEDER
Costa Rica

REGISTRATION:
<https://bit.ly/HRAPLATAM>



LEITNER HUMAN RIGHTS SPEAKER SERIES:

The Plight of Human Rights for Indigenous Women & Girls in Mexico



Elvira Constantina Pablo Antonio
Policy and Member Engagement Officer
(Latin America and the Caribbean)
Girls Not Brides

Register: leitnercenter.org/events | 25 February 2022
10:00 AM-11:00AM ET

co-sponsored with HRAP at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University



Leitner Center
for International Law and Justice

AT FORDHAM LAW SCHOOL, NEW YORK CITY



HRAP
Human Rights Advocates Program
Columbia University
Institute for the Study of Human Rights

Isabella Mukankusi

Co. Founder and CEO
Wak Mental Health Defenders
UGANDA

Legal and Advocacy Advisor
MyStory Initiative

My desire to become a human rights advocate grew slowly from an early age and over a period of time, but it was the culmination of two main factors: my personal circumstances and my father. The first person who inspired me to think about becoming a lawyer was my father. I was fortunate to work with him much later in life. He was a man who worked tirelessly to serve the voiceless in the face of state coercion and adversity. In the late 1970s, we lived in fear. At that time, my late father, Ayigihugu, was a defense attorney who represented clients that had worked under the reign of Idi Amin, a former president of Uganda. His work put his life and family in danger and on several counts, soldiers raided our homes looking for him. As a result we hid and slept in bushes in fear of our lives. The determination to continue representing his clients inspired me to become a lawyer.

Growing up, I also witnessed and experienced unfairness and injustices at an early age. Living in a small village, I saw survivors of domestic abuse, witnessed child marriages and widows chased from their homes. Because the justice system was weak, perpetrators of these crimes were never apprehended, and this increased crime and impunity within the communities. Cases of mob justice became rampant simply because individuals had lost faith in the system. My early experiences made me more aware that becoming a lawyer would not change the world, but that I would use the knowledge to fight such injustices and make a difference.

One time in 2009, I attended to a client who said that she was not able to feed her children and send them to school because she had no income and her ex-husband was not paying child maintenance. We contacted the ex-husband to remind him of his parental obligation and urged him to support the children. Concluding such matters without resorting to lengthy court processes gave me such satisfaction. Resolving a matter that makes a huge difference in another person's life is what gives me the joy to work as a human rights advocate.

Being a human rights advocate every so often means working in communities, listening and aiding individuals on the way to the right answers to their legal needs; we have to have the skills to identify the root cause of the problem to stop it from continuing. I have had a longstanding desire to work on improving the rights of persons with disabilities. I have since co-founded Wak Mental Health Defenders, an organization set up to advocate and address injustices and inequalities experienced by persons with disabilities. I hope to use the platform to do this work because systemic and individual violations of the rights cannot go unchecked. All the above and more, are the reasons I became a human rights advocate. I use my voice and platform to create change.

Resolving a matter that makes a huge difference in another person's life is what gives me the joy to work as a human rights advocate.



Isabella Mukankusi

FACULTY MENTOR

S. Garnett Russell

Associate Professor, International and Comparative Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

CLASSES

Gender Justice

Sexual and Reproductive Services in Humanitarian Settings

Gender-based Violence

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Candid

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

UNICEF

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Human Rights Awareness in a Time of Crisis. A Case Of Uganda's Schools, Teachers College

Human Rights Panel, George Clement Bond Center for African Education, Teachers College

Promoting the Rights of Person with Psychosocial Disabilities in Uganda, Leitner Center for Human Rights, Fordham Law School

Voices from the Frontlines of Human Rights, Introduction to Human Rights, ISHR

LEITNER HUMAN RIGHTS SPEAKER SERIES:

Promoting the Rights of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities in Uganda



Isabella Mukankusi
Legal and Advocacy Advisor
MyStory Initiative

Register:
leitnercenter.org/events

18 November 2021
12:30PM-1:30PM est.

co-sponsored with HRAP at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University



Leitner Center
for International Law and Justice
AT FORDHAM LAW SCHOOL, NEW YORK CITY



The George Clement Bond
CAE Center for
African
Education
TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS IN A TIME OF CRISIS: A CASE OF UGANDA'S SCHOOLS



A Conversation with
Isabella Mukankusi

Isabella is a 2021 ISHR Human Rights Advocate and the Legal and Advocacy Advisor at MyStory Initiative, a nongovernmental organization based in Uganda that promotes human rights for persons with disabilities. She is passionate about justice and human rights, having trained as a lawyer. She also works directly with grassroots communities on women's and children's rights.

TUESDAY | APRIL 5, 2022 |
4-5:00 P.M | GDH 369

TO REQUEST DISABILITY-RELATED
ACCOMMODATIONS, CONTACT OASID AT
OASID@TC.EDU, OR 212-678-3689, (646) 755-3144
VIDEO PHONE, AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

Mariam Antadze

Project Coordinator

Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
GEORGIA


As a child growing up in Georgia in the 1990's, war was all I knew, including the initial conflict in Abkhazia, civil unrest in Tbilisi, the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the hardships that followed. To me, it seemed only natural to become a human rights advocate and to give back to the community and the people who have suffered so much. I was fortunate enough to earn an undergraduate degree in Forensic Psychology in the United States. That is when the 2008 August war happened, which was the first interstate armed conflict on European soil in the 21st century as Russia invaded Georgia. Watching the war unfold and witnessing all the injustice, discrimination, and denial of rights suffered by the victims, I felt that my knowledge and skills would be best applied to vulnerable communities in Georgia. So, I returned.

The first time I became involved in the field of human rights was in 2010 when I joined the project team at the Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims-GCRT to manage the resocialization program that was being implemented in Georgia's closed penitentiary system. Since then, I've been fighting for the rights of detainees in Georgian prisons and post-release. In the following years, I advocated for human rights issues internationally, including advocating for victims of the 2008 August War and promoting social empowerment and rehabilitation for victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence to combat inequality and discrimination. I strongly believe that human dignity, autonomy, and self-determination can be restored through rehabilitation, and adequate support.

Even though human rights offer the means to live a sustainable life that is free from violence, human rights advocacy work can often seem pointless—especially given all the resources needed and intensive efforts required. However, I have learned throughout my career that despite the challenges faced when securing justice for the 2008 August War victims, as well as the widespread acceptance of violence against women in my country where patriarchy still reigns, saving one life and returning one saved soul to the body is an extraordinary feat, and an accomplishment of this magnitude sets an example for others.

Recently, I heard a story from Dr. Hawthorne Smith, the director of the Bellevue Program for Torture Survivors, that touched me. The story goes like this: there was a little girl who fished with her father and other fishermen every morning. One night, a storm rolled through, bringing shells of all kinds to the shore. On the next morning, the little girl began searching for shells and throwing them back into the water one by one. She continued doing this for many hours. Later that day, her father approached and pleaded with her to stop, explaining that she could not save every shell. She took one shell in her hand and replied, "Yes, but it matters for this one." She continued to toss the shells back into the ocean one at a time.

In stories with drop-in-the-ocean outcomes like this, we are reminded that even seemingly insignificant acts can have profound impact. We should never give up.



I strongly believe that human dignity, autonomy, and self-determination can be restored through rehabilitation, and adequate support.

Mariam Antadze

FACULTY MENTOR

Elise Giuliano

Lecturer, Political Science
Director of Graduate Studies MA
Program, The Harriman Institute

CLASSES

Gender Justice

Gender-based Violence Against Women

Sexual and Reproductive Health in
Humanitarian Settings

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Candid

Global Mental Health Lab, Teachers
College

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Survivors of Torture, Bellevue Hospital

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission,
U.S. Congress

Torture Abolition and Survivors Support
Coalition (TASS)

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Comparison Between the War in
Georgia and the Ongoing Crisis
in Ukraine, Human Rights and
Humanitarian Policy Practicum, SIPA

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Reflections
on Historical and Psychological
Dimensions, The Harriman Institute

Voices from the Frontlines of Human
Rights, Introduction to Human Rights,
ISHR



Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Reflections on Historical and Psychological Dimensions

Mariam Antadze (project coordinator at the Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and a Fellow in the Human Rights Advocates Program at ISHR) will discuss the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine and its mental health and psychosocial implications on communities. Moderated by **Elise Giuliano** (Harriman Institute).

Focusing on how war affects mental health and psychosocial development facilitates a better understanding of trauma experienced by people who are directly or indirectly affected. Among the topics Antadze will discuss: Russia's post-Soviet invasions chronologically; what we have learned from Russia's war in Georgia; understanding how sociopolitical and psychological factors interact in war trauma; psycho- and mental health needs that arise from war; and justice as a healing factor.

Tuesday, April 12 at 1:00 pm
Hybrid Event
1219 International Affairs Building
Register at harriman.columbia.edu



Marija Krstevska

Secretary General

Center for Intercultural Dialogue

NORTH MACEDONIA

Since I was little everybody knew me as this 'rebellious' kid that always reacts to injustice and unfair treatment—especially when it was about different treatment based on gender or age. I just couldn't understand why the housework in the society should be divided strictly but notably unfairly between men and women, and why I have to keep silent before the elderly when I do not agree. No matter if the other person was a friend, someone older, a family member, or a professor, I just had to have my say and that is how it was.

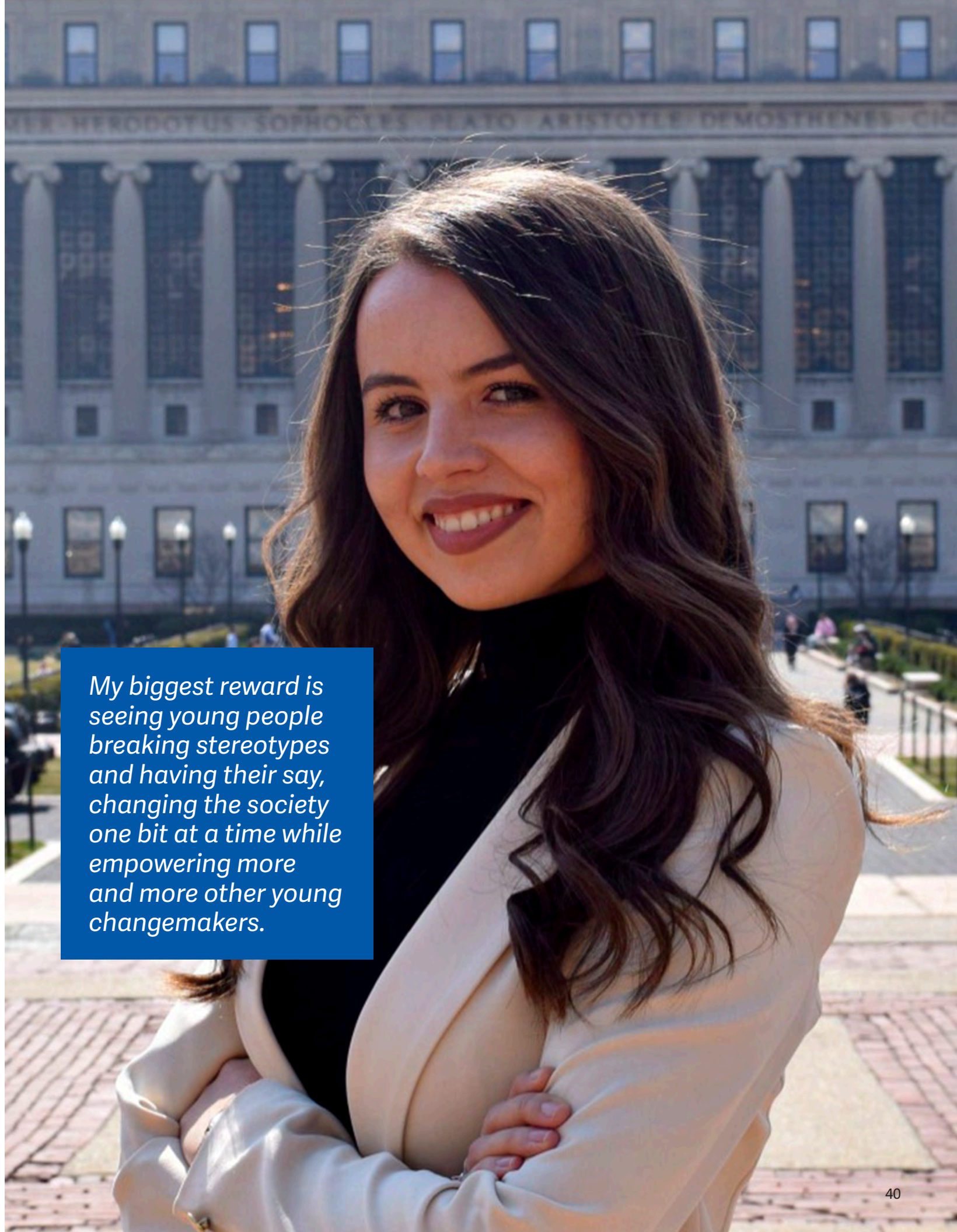
When I enrolled in the Law Faculty, everybody thought that I will be a lawyer or a judge. But to be honest, I never wanted to pursue a career in law. I just didn't have many options in my country connected to human rights. Nonetheless, I continued in parallel to build my capacities and enrich my knowledge on human rights and advocacy through non-formal education.

I was 15 when I had my first encounter with non-formal education and I immediately fell in love with it. That changed my life. Thereafter, I dove deeper in exploring human rights education, and by the time I was 20 I started working as a trainer, at the beginning on a Street Law program for high school students, and later on many other programs promoting intercultural dialogue, democracy, youth participation and many more connected to human rights. I realized that you can discuss and work on so many

topics through the prism of human rights. And I believe I found my vocation. I enjoy working with youth. My biggest reward is seeing young people breaking stereotypes and having their say, changing the society one bit at a time while empowering more and more other young changemakers.

What I try to show to young people and everybody I work with is that I didn't choose where to be born, I didn't choose when I will be born, nor how I will look, but I do choose who I become. So do you, everybody around you, and literally every human being. My identity is not just my nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, or profession, but all of this combined and so much more. There are so many layers in each person that are worth discovering, why choose to look at only one, why choose to look at the world in black and white where there are so many beautiful colors that will warm your soul. Every human being deserves to be treated with respect and have the same rights. Every human being, just because they are human before anything else. Same as you.

Therefore, if you ask me why am I human rights advocate I will say because I want everyone to be considered as a human being, and get an equal chance before being labeled and seen through only one characteristic they possess.



My biggest reward is seeing young people breaking stereotypes and having their say, changing the society one bit at a time while empowering more and more other young changemakers.

Marija Krstevska

FACULTY MENTOR

Lara Nettelfield
Senior Lecturer in the Discipline
of Human Rights, ISHR and the
Department of Political Science Classes

CLASSES

Gender Justice
Global 20: Youth in an Interconnected
World

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA
Candid
Human Rights Watch
The Inspection Panel, The World Bank
National Coalition against Censorship
National Endowment for Democracy
PEN America
Posse Foundation
RFK Human Rights
StoryCorps
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission,
U.S. Congress
United Nations Development Program
U.S. Department of State
United States Institute of Peace
WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Finding Common Ground: Intercultural
Dialogue Among Youth in North
Macedonia, Harriman Institute and
ISHR
Youth Perspective in the Context Of
North Macedonia, Global 20: Youth in an
Interconnected World



HRAP COLUMBIA HARRIMAN INSTITUTE 75
Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies

Finding Common Ground: Intercultural Dialogue Among Youth in North Macedonia

Marija Krstevska, Secretary General of the
Center for Intercultural Dialogue, will discuss
her trajectory as a girl raised in a mono-ethnic
environment to a young advocate for
intercultural acceptance. She will discuss
the importance of active citizenship, capacity
building, and non-formal education in fostering
intercultural dialogue among youth. Moderated
by **Lara J. Nettelfield** (Harriman Institute/ISHR).



**Thursday, March 31
12pm
Hybrid Event
1219 International Affairs Building**



The Advocates spent some of their free time exploring the city.

Mario D'Andrea

Lawyer

Defiende Venezuela, Civilis Derechos Humanos, and Compromiso Compartido

VENEZUELA

I became a human rights advocate as an unexpected consequence of having to live through and attend law school amidst the destruction of democracy and the rule of law in my country, Venezuela.

In 2014, during the second year of my career, Venezuelans who were experiencing a shortage of food and goods and facing hyperinflation took to the streets from February to May in protest against the government. The protests pushed for freedom and better economic conditions. As a student, I took the streets too with my colleagues. At the Human Rights Center of my university, the Andres Bello Catholic University, I found a way to contribute by supporting the professors and lawyers who were providing pro bono legal aid to the students who had been arbitrarily detained. It was my first experience with human rights law. I went from being a law intern in a firm dealing with administrative and tax law to a guy who looks at human rights with curiosity.

From 2014 to 2017, I learned how to litigate in the Inter-American Human Rights System by representing my university in all of the human rights moot courts.

As a law student in 2017 which was my last year of law school, a new wave of protests began. Once again, I contributed to the human rights center at my university. I started to go to court so that I could actually witness a hearing and visit students in jail to give support and collect data.

Those were tough months. I woke up, went to class to take exams, protested, accompanied the demonstrators, returned home to eat and study, and then searched at

night for detainees to offer them help. I did this from April to August when the Nicolas Maduro government imposed an illegitimate National Constituent Assembly.


All of those experiences led me to become a human rights defender. As soon as I obtained my law degree, I looked for a job in civil society and joined Civilis Derechos Humanos where I worked for one year. Since then, I have worked with Defiende Venezuela, where I have been for four years. I am a senior lawyer with experience in litigation before the Inter-American and universal human rights systems. I have consulted with many NGOs.

I will never forget the first time when the IACHR granted my first precautionary measure, when I had my first private hearing in Washington D.C., and when I had a dialogue with the commissionaires and the agents of state about a victim. It felt as though all the competitions that I did during the school of law had become a reality.

I know I am human rights advocate due to my context. If I had grown up or studied without all these situations, I would have continued my training in another area of law, working at a law firm or something similar.

From my experience at HRAP, I am glad to have participated in two events with the Institute for Latin American Studies, first talking only about Venezuela and then about human rights in the region, including the situation in Venezuela, with my cohort friends.

It was also a great opportunity to meet with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch and to raise awareness in favor of migrants who arrive in this country



I will never forget the first time when the IACHR granted my first precautionary measure, when I had my first private hearing in Washington D.C., and when I had a dialogue with the commissionaires and the agents of state about a victim.

Mario D'Andrea

fleeing the authoritarianism of my government while also helping me to rethink litigation strategies in Venezuela.

I appreciated talking with Professor Bryan Cheng of Teachers College about stress issues and how we can collaborate so that human rights defenders in Venezuela learn to better handle the pressure of working in a restrictive environment such as Venezuela.

Last but not least, coming to HRAP gave me the chance to attend a lot of events, especially at SIPA with my mentor Daniel Naujoks with whom I attended a lecture from Abdulla Shahid, the UN General Assembly President, and Jane Connors from the United Nations Office of the Victims Rights Advocate and many others. It was a dream to come here!



FACULTY MENTOR

Daniel Naujoks

Interim Director of International Organization and UN Studies Specialization, Lecturer of International and Public Affairs, School of International and Public Affairs Classes

CLASSES

Gender Justice

Human Rights and the Politics of Inequality

Latin America: Migration, Race and Ethnicity

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Candid

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Human Rights in Latin America: Perspectives from Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela moderated by David Holiday, ISHR and the Institute for Latin American Studies

Venezuela 2021: An Update on a Complex Humanitarian Crisis moderated by Professor Jose Moya, ISHR and Institute for Latin American Studies

Voices from the Frontlines of Human Rights, Introduction to Human Rights, ISHR

The advocates celebrated Mario's birthday.



VENEZUELA 2021
AN UPDATE ON A COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Moderated by Astrid Liden and Professor Jose Moya, Greater Caribbean Program at ILAS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21ST
6PM EST (NEW YORK) VIA ZOOM
EVENT IN SPANISH WITH ENGLISH INTERPRETATION

Logos: HRAP, Instituto de Estudios Latinoamericanos (IELA), CIVILIS DERECHOS HUMANOS, Compromiso COMPARTIDO, DEFLENDE VENEZUELA

Mario D'Andrea
Venezuelan Lawyer and Human Rights Activist
ISHR HUMAN RIGHTS FELLOW

Ritu Thapa

Lawyer

**Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Group
NEPAL**

I am an advocate of human rights focusing on women and Indigenous populations. I have been involved with human rights since college where I came to know the legal disparities between men and women. This inspired me to enter this field. I advocated for equal property rights for women in Nepal and am still advocating for citizenship rights and other legal issues related to women in Nepal. I had the chance to meet and interact with victims of human rights violations. In college, I connected with an Indigenous Students' Association. Through this, I learned that our community is not in the mainstream and how our ancestors were oppressed and compelled to follow the rulers' culture, language, and systems. There are many Indigenous peoples still suffering due to socio-economic, cultural, and legal barriers. They are also suffering due to limited access to justice. Among them, women, Indigenous populations, and marginalized communities fare worse. They are victimized more so due to their poor education, economic conditions, and lack of legal awareness.

As a lawyer from the Indigenous community, I was especially aware of the needs. This led to the establishment of the Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Group (INWOLAG). Our mission is to provide free legal services to the Indigenous and marginalized communities, especially for women and young girls. Through our work, we have seen that the Indigenous peoples of Nepal have been dominated, discriminated, marginalized, and excluded by the dominant group with policy, practice, and patriarchy since 1768. They face multiple discriminations, including

racial, linguistic, religious, and cultural. The main challenges or obstacles facing Indigenous women: (i) Limited participation in decision-making processes, (ii) Lack of recognition of the collective rights of Indigenous peoples to their lands and resources, (iii) Scarcity or the loss of access to forests and natural resources needed to maintain the family's livelihood, (iv) Forced displacement brought about by development aggression, (v) Limited access to social services such as education and health, (vi) Loss of traditional roles and knowledge, and (vii) Domestic violence and, (viii) Gender-based violence, etc. The Nepal government has listed only 59 Indigenous nationalities—many groups are missing. The government has not recognized their distinct identity. As these distinct groups are not listed, this could hinder employment, education, and other benefits. While the Nepal government has signed many human rights instruments, Nepal has yet to enshrine them in domestic law.

Being the first LL.M. lawyer from the Magar Indigenous community, I strive to contribute my knowledge and skills toward human rights issues to benefit my community and country. We have had success on some issues however we are still advocating for the abolishment of all types of discriminatory practices legally and practically from the country. HRAP has given me the opportunity to interact with an international network; I believe it will be a great asset for me in the future improving human rights within my field.



Being the first LL.M. lawyer from the Magar Indigenous community, I strive to contribute my knowledge and skills toward human rights issues to benefit my community and country.

Ritu Thapa

FACULTY MENTOR

Yasmine Ergas

Director of the Specialization on Gender and Public Policy and Senior Lecturer in Discipline in International and Public Affairs

Director, Institute for the Study of Human Rights

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Decolonizing Global Health: On the Limits and Possibilities of Human Rights Advocacy, Mailman School of Public Health

Voices from the Frontlines of Human Rights, Introduction to Human Rights, ISHR

CLASSES

Advocating and Campaigning for Social and Economic Rights

Gender-based Violence Against Women

Gender Justice

NETWORKING

Adhikaar

Amnesty International-USA

Candid

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS



DECOLONIZING GLOBAL HEALTH: ON THE LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

WEDNESDAY
MARCH 2ND

60 Haven Ave.
B2 Conference Room

11:45 AM
-
12:45 PM

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES PROGRAM (HRAP) PANELISTS:



Aminatu S. Gambo

International Indigenous Women's Forum



Ritu Thapa

Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Group



Dominique St. Vil

Organisation Trans d'Haiti



Please join the Institute for the Study of Human Rights and Health and Human Rights certificate in welcoming guest lecturers from the 2021-22 Human Rights Advocates Program as they share their experiences. Takeaway lunches will be served.

Ro-Ann Mohammed

Founder and Director

SHE Barbados

BARBADOS

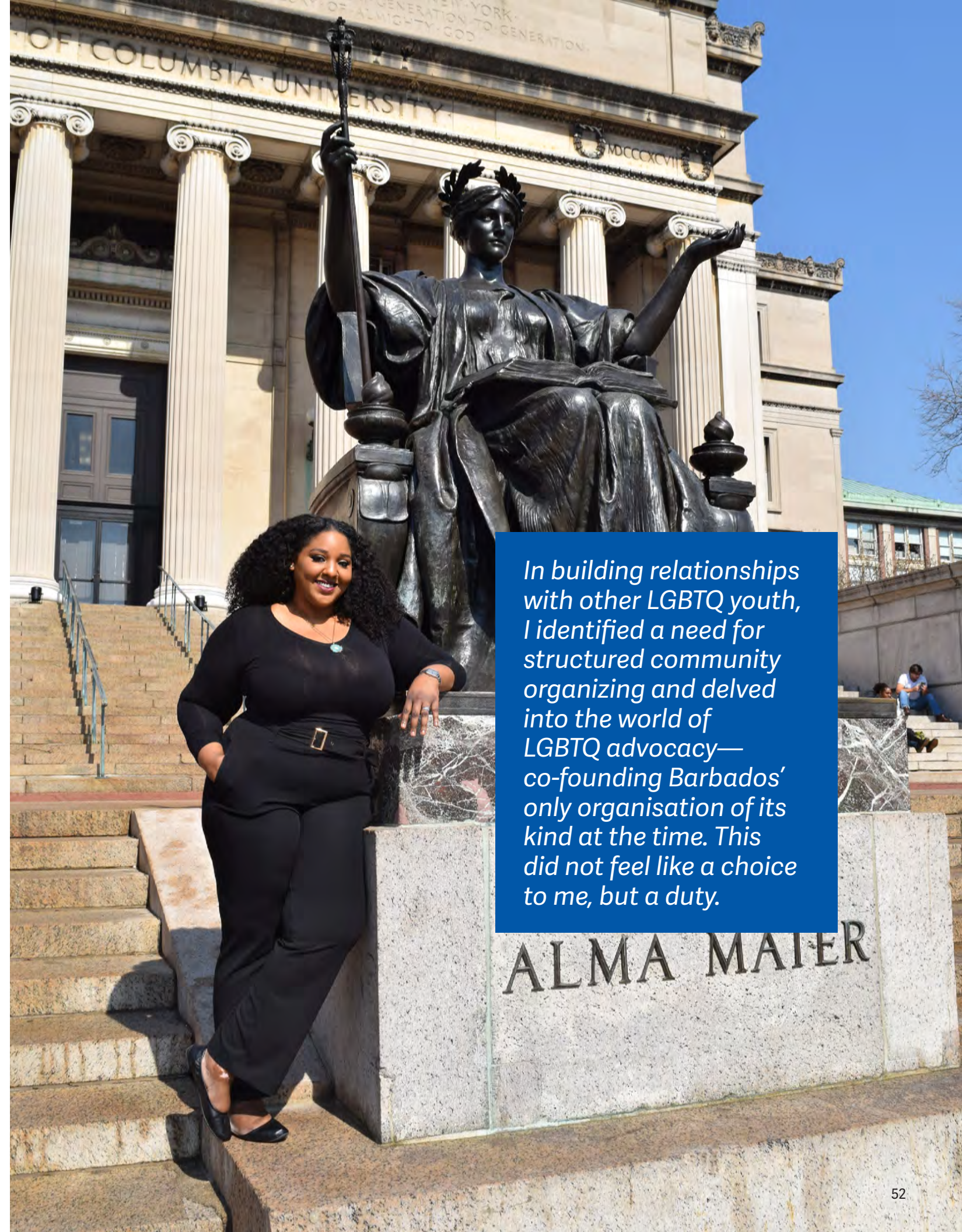
I have felt strongly compelled to help people since childhood and before I even knew what advocacy meant, I was driven to use my voice for change through my sensibility of fairness and equity. Growing up in the Caribbean, I was always acutely aware of the ways in which the most marginalized people in our societies are subjugated by the remnants of our violent colonial history. The Caribbean is a beautiful, culturally diverse region with a complex history and the sad reality of this complexity is that every Caribbean person is raised with the painful knowledge of slavery. However, the collective understanding of our ancestors' stories does not always move beyond trauma to celebrate the ways in which they resisted colonial violence or interrogate how we are all still affected by this history every day.

At 19, I migrated from my home country Trinidad and Tobago to a neighbouring Caribbean island, Barbados to pursue my tertiary education at the University of the West Indies. Here, I began to develop an awareness of my identity as a queer, black woman. It became abundantly clear to me that I would always have to grapple with navigating systems of oppression like patriarchy, anti-black racism and homophobia. More importantly, I began to understand the ways in which all of these systems intersected with each other. In building relationships with other LGBTQ youth, I identified a need for structured community organizing and delved into the world of LGBTQ advocacy - co-founding Barbados' only organisation of its kind at the time. This did not feel like a choice to me, but a duty. Even though I deal with marginalization in my own

life, I recognize the ways in which I am privileged and find it necessary to extend solidarity to people who cannot be visible.

As my career in LGBTQ advocacy progressed, so did my awareness of the fragmentation between the LGBTQ and feminist movements. I also recognized the ways in which LGBTQ movements were hyperfocused on the experiences of cisgender gay men while feminist movements focused on the experiences of cisgender straight women. This means that queer women and trans and non-binary people, who are extremely vulnerable and often at the frontlines of movements, were left behind. This was particularly evident around access to justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and resource allocation. Again, compelled by my passion for equity and my personal experiences, I founded SHE Barbados, an organisation focused on advocacy, research, movement building and providing access to SRHR services for queer women, trans and non-binary people in Barbados.

Perhaps most importantly, throughout my journey in advocacy I have been honoured to learn from a Caribbean legacy of collective organizing and resisting and found much solace in sharing space and time, learning, building, laughing, loving and co-conspiring to dismantle oppressive structures with other activists who are working towards similar goals. We are human rights advocates because we believe that we have the collective power to build the future that we all deserve.



In building relationships with other LGBTQ youth, I identified a need for structured community organizing and delved into the world of LGBTQ advocacy—co-founding Barbados' only organisation of its kind at the time. This did not feel like a choice to me, but a duty.

Ro-Ann Mohammed

FACULTY MENTOR

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

Professor of English and Comparative Literature

Founding Director of the Media and Idea Lab

Founding Curator of the Latino Arts and Activism Archive, Columbia's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library

CLASSES

Gender Justice

Transnational LGBTI Rights

NETWORKING

Amnesty International-USA

Arcus Foundation

Candid

Human Rights Watch

The Inspection Panel, The World Bank

National Endowment for Democracy

PEN America

RFK Human Rights

StoryCorps

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress

United Nations Development Program

U.S. Department of State

United States Institute of Peace

WITNESS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT

The Current State of LGBTQI+ Rights in Costa Rica, Barbados, Haiti & Guatemala, Human Rights Campaign and ISHR

LARISSA ARROYO NAVARRETE (SHE/HER)
FOUNDER, ASOCIACIÓN CIUDADANA ACCEDER COSTA RICA

RO-ANN MOHAMMED (SHE/HER)
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, SHE BARBADOS

DOMINIQUE ST. VIL (HE/HIM)
EXECUTIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR, ORGANISATION TRANS D'HAÏTI (OTRAH) HAITI

DANIEL VILLATORO (HE/HIM)
COORDINATOR, LATIN AMERICAN LGBTI JOURNALISM INITIATIVE GUATEMALA

The Current State of LGBTQI+ Rights in Costa Rica, Barbados, Haiti & Guatemala

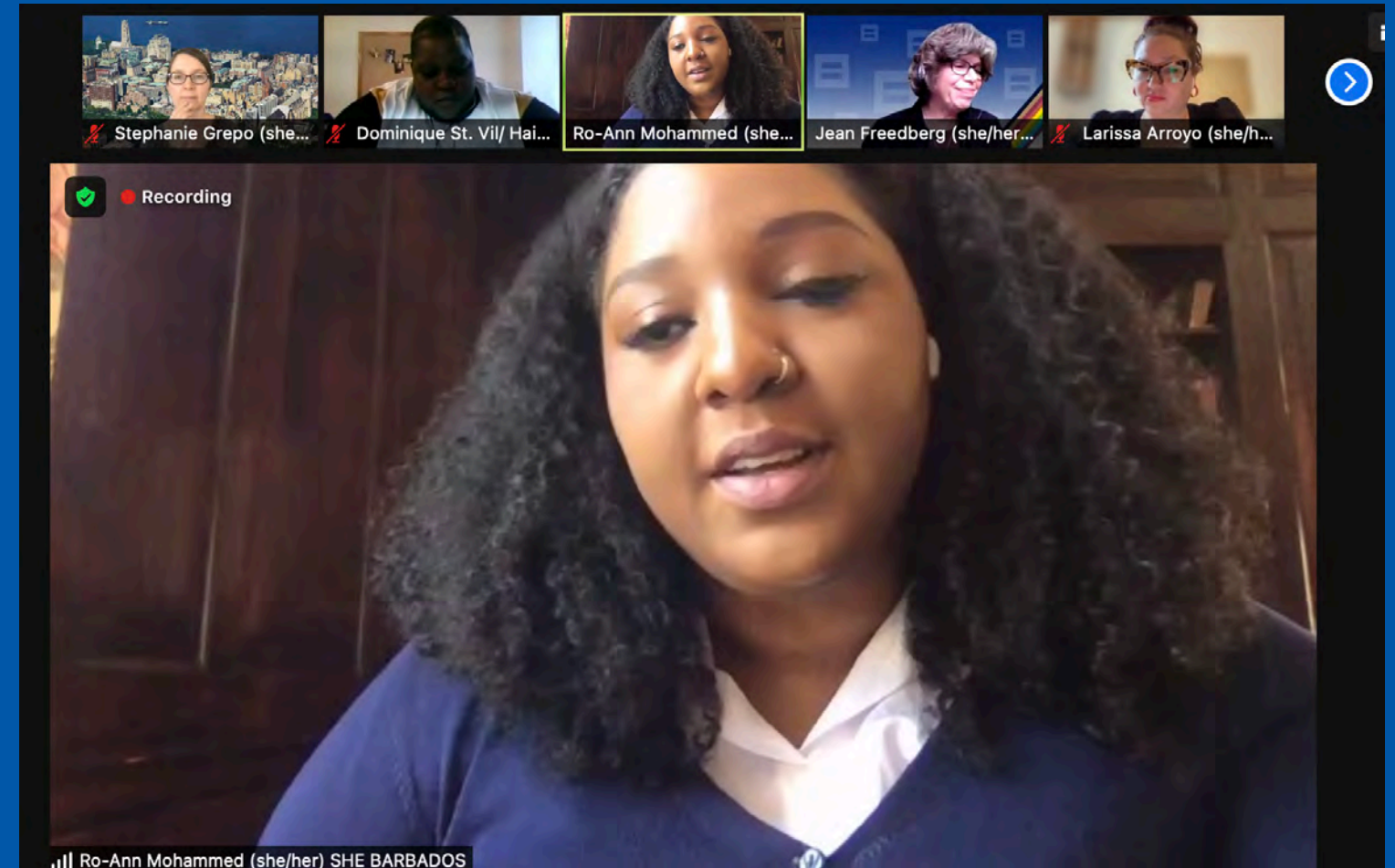
A CONVERSATION WITH PARTICIPANTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES PROGRAM

MODERATED BY JEAN FREEDBERG (SHE/HER), DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS AT HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

Monday, April 4
12 pm - 1 pm ET

For Zoom login, register at <https://bit.ly/HRAPHRC>

ISHR Institute for the Study of Human Rights
HRAP
HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN
COLUMBIA | SIPA Gender and Public Policy
Institute of Latin American Studies



The Advocates toured the New York Public Library on Fifth Ave.

3

Workshops, Conversations and Lectures

Is it a human rights violation?

Single incident	Many incidents	Strong laws protecting victims	Remedies (complaint mechanisms, investigations) ?	Implementing ?	Violation?
✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	

Human Rights Watch offered the Advocates a six-part workshop on Research, Writing and Documentation.

Research, Documentation, and Writing

Jane Buchanan
Deputy Director of the Disability Rights Division
Human Rights Watch

Kyle Knight
Senior Researcher on Health and LGBT Issues
Human Rights Watch

Jane Buchanan 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.

Human Rights Skills and Advocacy

Jo Becker
Advocacy Director, Children's Rights Division
Human Rights Watch

Jo Becker led the advocates through an exploration of human rights campaigns, the use of the media, and advocacy with UN bodies, the U.S. government, and the private sector.

Risk of Retraumatization

- Ongoing abuse
- Trauma occurred recently or multiple times
- Lack of social support
- Lack of access to services
- Age
- Multiple interviews
- Strong emotional distress/numbing
- Other psychosocial disabilities

Jane Buchanan and Kyle Knight of Human Rights Watch worked with the Advocates.

Intro to Columbia University Libraries

Yuusuf Caruso
African Studies Librarian
Columbia University Libraries

Yuusuf Caruso 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 Candid

Tracy Kaufman
Programs Manager
Candid

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

Candid, formerly known as The Foundation Center, offered a workshop.

Resilience and Trauma

Rafael Florestal-Kevelier
Executive Director, Ask Alice! Health Promotion
Columbia Health

Dr. Raphael D. Coleman led the advocates in an interactive workshop in which they talked about trauma, building capacity for resilience in individuals and communities, and strategies for self-care and stress management.

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES PROGRAM, FEBRUARY 2022

RESILIENCE IN THE TRENCHES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Building Capacity for Individual and Community Resilience as Change Agents

PREPARED BY:
Dr. Raphael Florestal-Kevelier | Executive Director
Alice! Health Promotion, Columbia Health

Dr. Rafael Florestal-Kevelier led a workshop on trauma and resilience.



The Advocates attended a multi-part workshop on fundraising led by Erik Detiger.

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 Detiger 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

Isabel Pinheiro
 WITNESS

Isabel Pinheiro 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.

Human Rights Documentation

Pamela Graham
 Director, Humanities & Global Studies and 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.

Youth in a Changing World

Laura Neitzel
 Senior Fellow in Global Thought
 Senior Lecturer in the Discipline of History
 Columbia University

Laura Neitzel spoke with the Advocates about the “Youth in a Changing World” (YCW) project, which is a collaboration with the Columbia Global Centers. YCW is a series of global workshops, where youth discuss among themselves how their future aspirations are affecting and being affected by the rapidly changing world.

Oral History

Zoë West
 Adjunct Faculty
 Oral History Master in Arts

Zoë West led two workshops focused on the use of oral history interviewing for human rights and social justice work. The advocates explored key principles of oral history, and discussed practices that support shared authority, collaborative methods, deep listening, and a trauma-informed approach. The participants were guided through oral history project planning, with particular attention to political and ethical issues to consider. We ended the second session by workshopping some specific oral history and interviewing projects that advocates are currently pursuing.

Beyond Data For Good

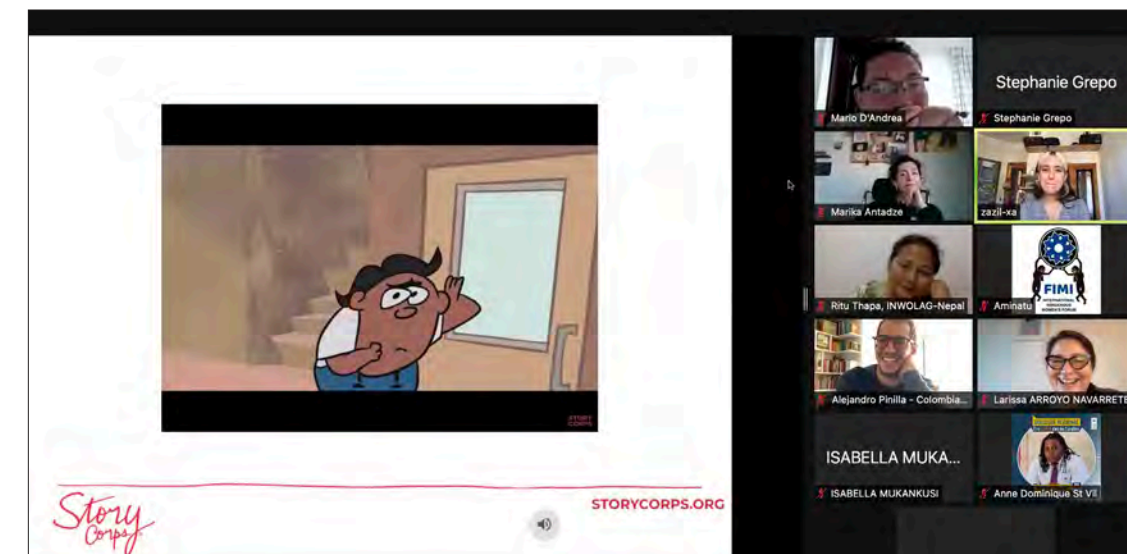
Jaclyn Sawyer
 Lecturer in Social Work
 Columbia University
 Director of Data Services
 Breaking Ground

This workshop was designed to build a critical foundation for doing human rights and social justice work in a datafied world. Participants in this workshop developed a basic “data literacy”, by exploring building a dataset, working with data, and data storytelling. Throughout the workshop the advocates developed a basic framework for how to critique data-based projects and weigh the ethical considerations of using data about people and social welfare issues.

An Introduction to StoryCorps

Zazil Davis-Vazquez
 National Facilitators
 StoryCorps

Zazil Davis 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. She also invited the advocates to record conversations with StoryCorps.



StoryCorps offered the advocates a workshop and recorded conversations with those who were interested.

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HRAP Alumni Sessions

The following HRAP alumni shared their experiences as human rights advocates with the 2021–22 HRAP cohort.

2011 Advocate Elvis Mbembe Binda

On the first day of orientation for the 2021–22 HRAP cohort, Elvis spoke with the advocates about his HRAP experience and the impact it continues to have on him to the present time.

Elvis is the president and a founding member of Initiatives for Peace and Human Rights, which helps communities and individuals in Africa's Great Lakes Region achieve sustainable peaceful coexistence using human rights and good governance education. Elvis is a member of the Rwanda Bar Association and the East African Law Society. He holds a PhD in law from Utrecht University (the Netherlands). He has been a lecturer at the School of Law at the University of Rwanda since 2007.

1996 Advocate Twesigye Jackson Kaguri

Jackson spoke with current HRAP participants about his 25-year journey educating HIV/AIDS orphans in southwestern Uganda.

Jackson was born and raised in Uganda in the village of Nyakagezi. A graduate of Makerere University, Kaguri co-founded the human rights organization, Human Rights Concerns, to help victims of human rights violations in Uganda and to educate the public about their rights. In 2001, he founded the Nyaka AIDS Orphans Project in response to the devastating effects of AIDS in his hometown. The organization provides free education to children who have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. In addition to two primary schools and a secondary school, Nyaka also operates two libraries, a farm, a nutrition program, a medical clinic, two clean water systems, and a support program for the grandmothers who care for as many as 14 children at a time. Since founding the project, Kaguri has also become an author. He was named a CNN Hero in 2012 and the winner of the Waislitz Global Citizen Award in 2015.

2005 Advocate Alejandra Ancheita

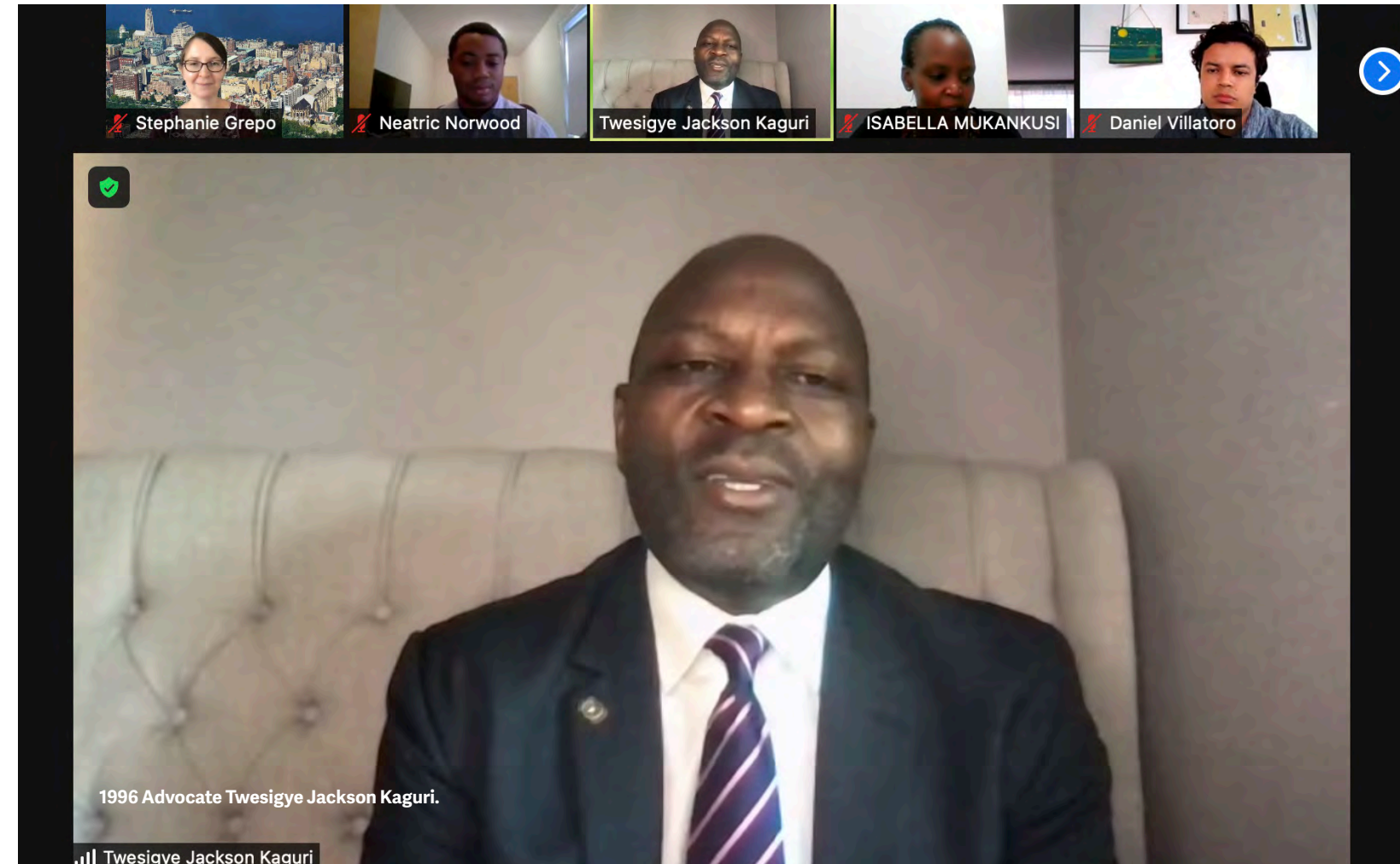
Alejandra drew from her own experience as she encouraged the advocates to nourish and care for themselves as they pursue their work.

Alejandra, the founder and executive director of the Mexico City-based Project of Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights (ProDESC), is a lawyer and activist who leads the fight for the rights of the migrants, workers, and Indigenous communities of her native country to raise their standard of living. Since founding ProDESC in 2005, Alejandra and her dedicated team have run strategic campaigns aimed at protecting the economic, social, and cultural rights of Mexico's most marginalized people. In 2014, she was honored with the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders.

2018 Advocate Marijana Savic

Marijana shared with the advocates how the war in the former Yugoslavia affected her both personally and professionally.

Marijana is the founder and executive director of the Citizens Association for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and All Forms of Gender-Based Violence (ATINA), an NGO in Serbia. ATINA promotes women's and children's rights throughout Serbia, specifically advocating for victims of trafficking, sexual abuse, labor exploitation, discrimination, and violence. With Marijana's leadership and creativity, ATINA founded The Bagel Bejgl, a social enterprise leveraging the market-based economy to create a safe space where women trafficking survivors can learn new skills and find employment opportunities alongside other survivors and at-risk women. Bagel Bejgl also generates funds for reintegration programs for victims of trafficking and other forms of exploitation. The organization pledges their profits to services for survivors and those at risk of trafficking with the overall goal of ending human trafficking in the community. In addition to her work with ATINA, Marijana also serves as an advisor to international NGOs and state governments advocating for the inclusion of marginalized trafficking victims in human rights policy.



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Support

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights is grateful to the following for their financial support of the advocates in the 2021–22 program.

Ambassador Nicholas Platt in memory of his wife, Sheila Platt

Friends of 1990 Advocate Felipe Michelini of Uruguay in his memory

Professors Joan M. Ferrante and Carey McIntosh

American Jewish World Service

Arcus Foundation

Harriman Institute, Columbia University

International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIWF/FIMI)

Wellspring Philanthropic Fund



Sheila Platt worked with countless HRAP cohorts on stress management over the years. Sheila was photographed with Anna Kirey and Mary Akrami of the 2009 HRAP.



1990 Advocate Felipe Michelini always made time to visit the advocates when he was in NYC. Here Felipe is with members of the 2016 cohort.

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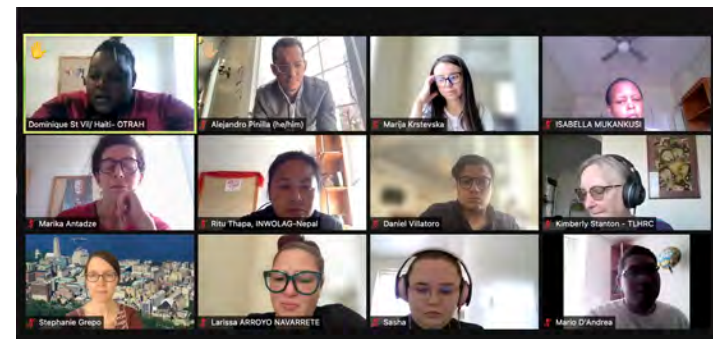
Testimonials

“The Human Rights Advocates Program is an asset. Not only for Columbia University but for a global community, which believes in the relevance of human rights and the need to advance these rights for everyone, so that no one is left behind. Through their tireless work, in challenging environments, often risking their own lives and wellbeing, human rights advocates make the world a better, fairer, greener, more peaceful, and more inclusive place. Their mission is noble and their work must be supported.”

—**Boyan Konstantinov, Policy Specialist, Key Populations, LGBTI Rights and Inclusive Development, HIV, Health and Development Practice—BPPS/GPN, United Nations Development Programme**

“The Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) contributed profoundly to shaping our understanding on the intersections of decoloniality, human rights and health at Columbia’s school of public health. The HRAP advocates were able to draw on their deep knowledge and experiences of activism across various parts of the world to simultaneously complicate and advance our understanding of the human right to health. They challenged students and faculty at the school of public health to reflect on the savage-victim-savior metaphor in the context of human rights advocacy, simultaneously inspiring us to think deeply about how we could work collectively to realize the right to health.”

—**A. Kayum Ahmed, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Population and Family Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University**



The Advocates met with the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission during the virtual trip to D.C.

“I had the privilege of meeting with the HRAP cohort twice this past semester—once with a smaller select group of those whom our Global Mental Health Lab at Teachers College members and team had identified similarities in interest and regional work (Aminatu, Mario, Isabella, Dominique, Mariam, and Daniel), and once more with the larger cohort as a whole. Both meetings left me inspired, refreshed, and renewed for the important work that we do globally.”

In the first meeting where I hosted the advocates for an intimate lunch with our research team, we learned of the vital efforts the advocates have been putting forth to fight for equality and equity of oppressed and persecuted peoples within their respective regions. This not only served as a timely reminder to our team of the need for our continued work in advocating for and developing equitable and accessible structures and systems for mental healthcare, but also the pertinence of including and drawing from lived experiences in establishing entities that promote the voices of the people. The advocates also brought an abundance of experience that enriched our discussions, creating an exhilarating exchange of ideas between all present.

Subsequent to the invigorating lunch, I had the opportunity to meet the larger cohort over a lunch that they hosted. During this lunch, we were able to not only discuss ways in which we could each expand our own advocacy efforts, but also create connections and networks for possible collaborations in the near future!

All in all, the HRAP cohort were an exemplary group that proves vital to the promotion of awareness around persecution and inequity in the regions in which they work in. I can humbly say that my and my colleagues perspectives have been irrevocably expanded, and are excited to see how we can continue to make these connections that can further our work within the field of global mental health.”

—**Bryan Cheng, Ph.D., Director of Research, Global Mental Health Lab | Clinical Psychology Program, Teachers College, Columbia University**

“Marija Krstevska joined our semester-long seminar, “Global 20: Youth in an Interconnected World,” which examines the challenges and opportunities facing young people in a rapidly changing and increasingly unsettled world. She became an integral part of the class, forging connections with the undergraduates in the course, and becoming a role model to them, especially as she shared her perspectives as a youth advocate at the Center for Intercultural Dialogue in North Macedonia. She generously prepared a presentation for the class on her work and on the daunting challenge of “brain drain” as many young people leave the country to pursue educational and work opportunities not available at home. Inspired by her presentation, one group of students did their final project on the “push and pull” factors that bring international students to the U.S., particularly Columbia. We all learned so much from Marija, and are grateful that she joined our class this spring.”

—**Laura Neitzel, Senior Fellow in Global Thought / Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University**

“It was an honor to have Dominique St. Vil speak at the 2022 Fordham OUTlaw’s symposium entitled: International LGBTQIA+ Rights: Bridging Activism from Grassroots to Global Organizations. Dominique was an integral part of the event, and we are incredibly grateful to them for sharing their experience and their wisdom. Dominique’s activism and organizing efforts in Haiti are inspirational and all of our attendees learned so much from them!”

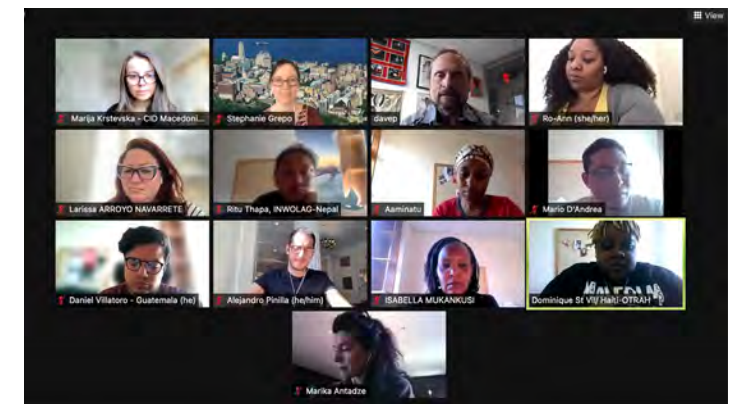
—**Georgianna L. Bonondona (she/her), J.D. Candidate 2023, Fordham Law School**



The Advocates met with Amnesty International USA’s Chief Collaboration Officer Adotei Akwesi.



The Advocates met with The Inspection Panel, The World Bank.



Dave Petersen, Senior Director of Africa at the National Endowment for Democracy, met with the Advocates during the virtual trip to D.C.

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ISHR Staff

Irene Atamian

Business Manager

Joanne Bauer

Senior Researcher, Business and Human Rights

Yasmine Ergas

Executive Director, Institute for the Study of Human Rights

Stephanie V. Grepo

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Gergana Halpern

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J. Paul Martin

Senior Scholar

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Communications and Outreach Coordinator

Anna Miller

Education Program Coordinator

Lara Nettelfield

Director, Graduate Studies

David L. Phillips, Director

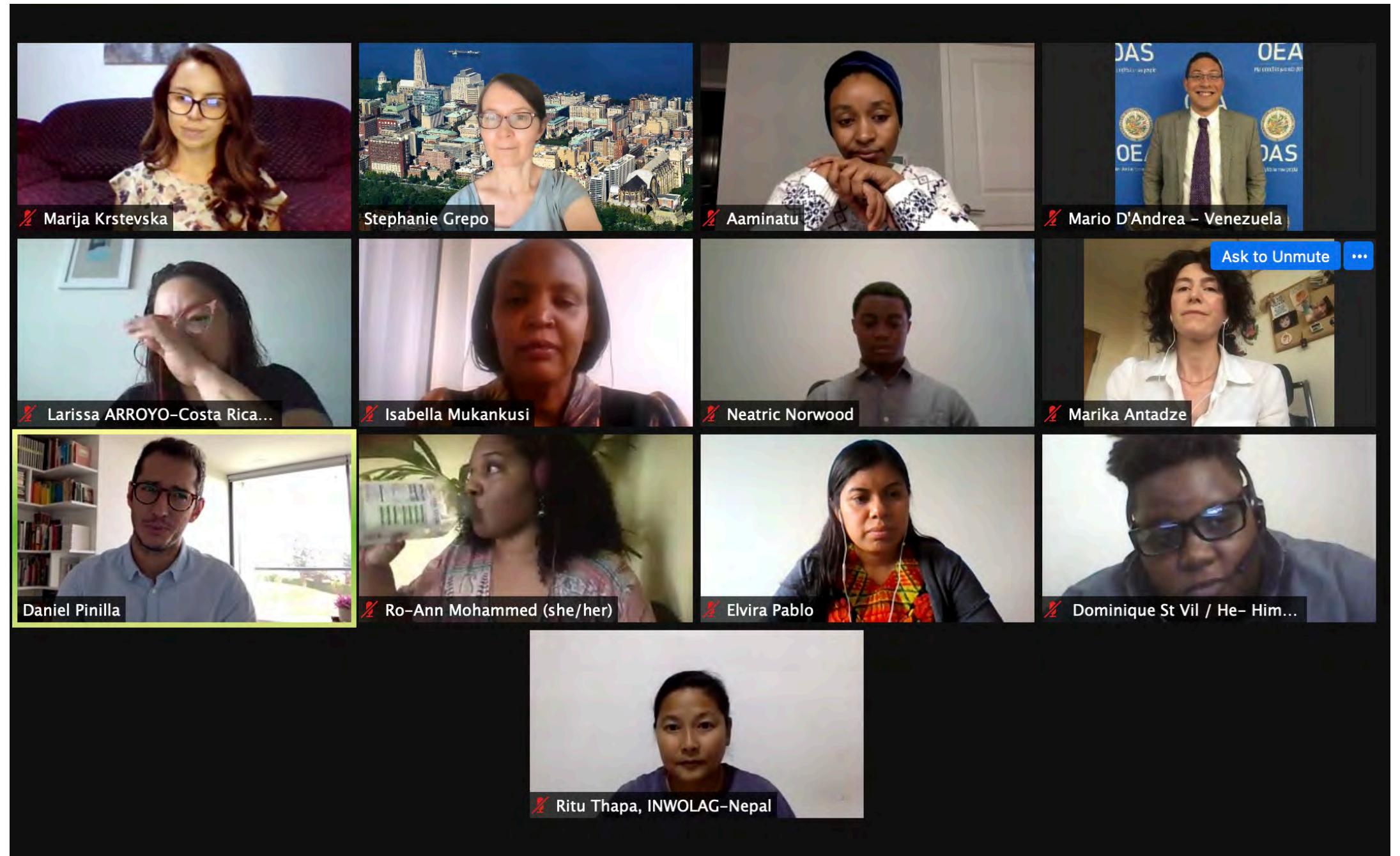
Peace-building and Rights and Human Rights

Elsa Stamatopoulou

Director, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program

Yvette Zapata

Finance Coordinator



The Advocates began their eight-month journey together in HRAP with an online meet and greet.

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HRAP Administration

Stephanie V. Grepo has been the Director of Capacity Building at ISHR since 2008. Responsible for ISHR's flagship training program, the Human Rights Advocates Program, Stephanie restructured HRAP, facilitated the development of an active HRAP alumni association that spans 93 countries, and raised funding to include LGBTQI+, disability, and Indigenous Peoples' rights advocates in the program. She has developed Institute-wide initiatives including ISHR's first MOOC, which is on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and can be found on edX, and the Student Volunteer Program through which Columbia students have volunteered with the alumni of ISHR's training programs including HRAP in more than 20 countries.

Prior to Columbia, Stephanie worked throughout the former Yugoslavia for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. She is most proud of having brought the Model UN to western Kosovo where it was one of the first programs to bring students of different ethnic backgrounds together after the war had ended. The program continues in Kosovo to this day and has served as a pathway to higher education for thousands of Kosovar students.

Stephanie is currently on the faculty of The School of The New York Times where she developed the school's first human rights course for high school students. For nearly a decade, she was a lecturer at The New School. 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.

Neatric Norwood was the 2021-22 HRAP assistant. Neatric is pursuing his Master in International Affairs at Columbia SIPA. Prior to Columbia, Neatric worked as the Fellowships and Leadership Development program assistant for the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School. Before joining Harvard, Neatric worked in Washington, D.C., as a staff assistant in the Office of Rep. French Hill (AR-02). While on Capitol Hill, Neatric supported the day-to-day administration, constituent services, and policy research for Rep. Hill's office. Neatric's passion for public service can also be seen in his prior experience serving as an intern for Mayor Mark Stodola of his hometown, Little Rock, Arkansas. After his time at Columbia, Neatric seeks to make an impact as an international civil servant in the humanitarian and conflict resolution space. Neatric received his B.A. in International Relations from Tufts University.



Stephanie (2nd from left) with Advocates Azra Birkic, Marayah Fyneah, Mary Akrami and Adama Diop.



Advocates and Neatric (center) attended The Lion King.

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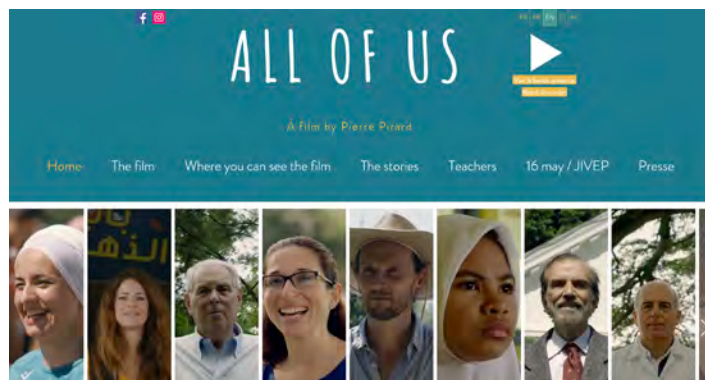
HRAP News



In March 2022, 2009 Advocate **Nazibrola Janezashvili** participated in the roundtable discussion *Shaping Judicial Councils to Meet Contemporary Challenges* which was organized by the Venice Commission with the University La Sapienza, Rome, and the University of Barcelona.



2010 Advocate **Bakary Tandia** participated in the panel discussion *Combating Voter Disenfranchisement and Engaging Human Rights* at the Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center at Howard University in the USA in April 2022.



2012 Advocate **Kemal Pervanic** is featured in the film *All of Us* which is a collection of stories of those working toward peace and harmony around the globe.

“Here’s a small country in West Africa that had a brutal civil war 20 years ago and they’ve managed to abolish the death penalty. They would actually be an example for you, U.S., rather than it always being the other way around,” said 2012 Advocate **Sabrina Mahtani** who was interviewed by *The New York Times* for **One by One, African Countries Dismantle Colonial-Era Death Penalty Laws**. (July 23, 2021)



2014 Advocate **Aviaja Egede Lynge** reported, “I made a presentation at the Conference on Social Exposure in Denmark. I talked about the conditions of families in Greenland as well as the barrier [that impede] their right to get help.” (May 2022)



2016 Advocate **Samuel Matsikure** of Gays & Lesbians of Zimbabwe launched a [series](#) on the rights and representation of LBTQI persons in Zimbabwe.



2016 Advocate **Jeffrey Wambaya** of ISHTAR MSM in Kenya presented two papers with senior staff from SAGE—Advocacy and Services for LGBT at the International Federation on Ageing 15th Global Conference, which was held in Canada in November 2021. The papers were *Advances and Challenges in Ageing Specific to LGBT People* and *Religious and Cultural Norms in Ageing*. Jeffrey said the following about his participation in the conference: “All of this is because of links that HRAP made for me with SAGE when I was in NYC.”

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In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we report that 2011 Advocate **Lydia Carolyn Cherop** of Uganda passed away in early 2022. We will always remember her zeal for life, eternal optimism, commitment to improving the lives of the women and girls she served, and love for her family.

Lydia was the executive director of Women Integrated Initiative for Development, an organization that she founded to promote and protect the rights of rural women and girls. She also volunteered with the Uganda Human Rights Commission, a national human rights institution, where she led the Kapchorwa field office.

Lydia earned a master's degree in development studies at Uganda Martyrs University with a scholarship from Irish Aid Uganda. "Education in human rights opens doors to other rights," she said in an interview with ISHR in 2019, "but rights are still lacking. The difference between illiterate and literate women is a change in suffering." She continued, "I am enlightened and can recognize human rights gaps because I am educated. I can understand human rights, but most women, unless educated, do not. My parents are so proud of me. My community honors me because I am a better person. This drives me to help them."

Lydia attended HRAP in 2011 with Elvis Mbembe Binda, the President of Initiatives for Peace and Human Rights in Rwanda. He shared the following tribute to Lydia with ISHR upon learning of her passing: "The first thing I noticed when I met Lydia in 2011 was her beaming smile and her innocent look. She was joyful and optimistic, no matter the adversity she faced. Even long after we attended HRAP, whenever we had conversations, the Kapchorwa Girl—as I teased her—always concluded, "I know it will be okay." Lydia never missed an opportunity to discuss the challenges faced by women in remote rural villages in her Soroti region. I know very few who bear the cause of women in remote rural areas with passion and dedication as Lydia did. I didn't meet her husband and kids. But from our conversations, I know how much Lydia treasured her family. I can imagine how much she is missed. We all miss you, Lydia!"



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1. 2011 Advocate Lydia Carolyn Cherop.
2. Lydia and fellow HRAP participant Ngungua Sangua Gisèle of the DRC.
3. Lydia (in yellow) and her HRAP cohort visited Ellis Island during Orientation Week.
4. Lydia and her HRAP colleagues learned about video advocacy at WITNESS.
5. Lydia and fellow HRAP participant Elvis Mbembe Binda of Rwanda at a workshop on Theater of the Oppressed.



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