

CEPS

CENTER FOR ETHICS & PUBLIC SERVICE

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CITIZEN LAWYERS WORKING IN COMMUNITY



MIAMI LAW

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL OF LAW

DEVOTED TO THE VALUES OF
ETHICAL JUDGMENT
PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY
AND PUBLIC SERVICE
IN LAW AND SOCIETY

CEPS PROGRAMS

Community Equity Lab

Founded in 2018 to address the urgent housing and health needs of socioeconomically impoverished and politically disenfranchised inner-city communities of color, the Community Equity, Innovation, and Resource Lab integrates anti-poverty and civil rights advocacy and grassroots organizing strategies with university-wide, interdisciplinary resources to advance social justice initiatives at the neighborhood intersection of race and inequality in the areas of education, health, housing, municipal equity, and the natural and built environment. Collaboratively launched with frontline institutions (civic associations, faith-based groups and church congregations, tenant and homeowner organizations) in co-investigative partnerships centered on neighborhood-wide, common entry point issues (displacement, environmental justice, fair and affordable housing, health disparities, and segregation), Lab initiatives seek to: (1) challenge the exclusion of disenfranchised groups from political, economic, and social systems to ensure equal access, equality of opportunity, and the fair distribution of public goods and services; (2) increase civic participation and democratic inclusion at local, state, and national levels to make government more representative and responsive; (3) strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of existing community-based organizations and promote innovative institution-building projects sustainable across private, public, and nonprofits sectors; (4) foster leadership development and professional training programs to counter entrenched cultural narratives of powerlessness; and (5) rebuild neighborhood civic infrastructures and link civic engagement constituencies to broader anti-poverty and civil rights advocacy and organizing networks locally, regionally, and nationally.



Historic Black Church Program

Established in 2007, the **Historic Black Church Program** is a community outreach and rights education project operated in partnership with more than 60 inner-city, faith-based groups, nonprofit corporations, and civic and neighborhood associations in South Florida. Program highlights include community-based advocacy and organizing in support of the West Grove Trolley Garage Campaign, which halted the discriminatory placement of a City of Coral Gables municipal bus depot in the historically segregated neighborhood of Coconut Grove Village West, the East Gables Trolley Access Campaign, which won municipal trolley service for residents of the historically segregated MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision and the Golden Gates District of East Coral Gables, and the Coconut Grove Village West Housing and Community Development Task Force Campaign, a fair-and-affordable housing coalition of more than a dozen civic associations, Black church congregations, and tenant and homeowner organizations seeking not only to halt the mass eviction, displacement, and resegregation of vulnerable Black tenants and homeowners, but also to negotiate urban development-specific community benefits agreements and, at the same time, to reform municipal land use and zoning policies that imperil at-risk tenants and homeowners.

Legal Profession Program

Launched in 1996, the **Legal Profession Program** includes both CLE-oriented practice seminars and student-centered leadership workshops in cooperation with Florida bar associations, federal and state courts, law firms, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Program highlights include the Annual Legal Malpractice and Professional Liability Roundtable, the Lawyers in Leadership Award luncheon, the Hoeveler Award luncheon, and the Ethics and Leadership Roundtable lunch series with leading members of the South Florida bar and bench.



Legal Profession Program Roundtable on *Changing Legal Landscape*

On Tuesday, September 22, the Center hosted its first virtual Legal Profession Roundtable, "The Changing Legal Landscape: Innovating and Adapting for Success." Students heard from a distinguished panel, including the Honorable Jennifer D. Bailey, Administrative Judge in the Civil Circuit Division of Florida's Eleventh Judicial Circuit; Tiffani Lee, partner at Holland & Knight and part of the firm's South Florida Litigation Group; and Maria Dantes-Sanchez, Vice President and Regional Attorney at Liberty Mutual Group and general counsel for the Hispanic National Bar Association. The event was moderated by the Center's David P. Catsman Fellow, Leandra Lopez.

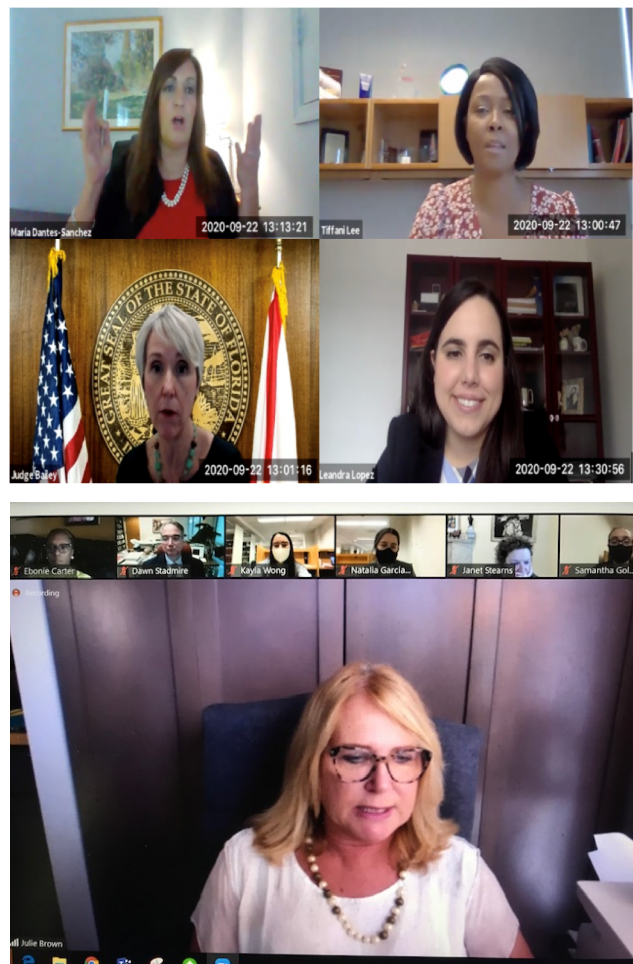
The panel discussed how the legal profession has evolved to address COVID-19, sharing insight of the various changes firms and the courts have made now that most employees are working from home. Students learned about efforts to streamline court proceedings to address inefficiencies and reduce client costs, new opportunities for networking via virtual platforms, and strategies for team-building absent in-person communication. Students also learned about challenges, including concerns about balancing privacy and accessibility in virtual meetings, and challenges developing mentoring relationships with new attorneys. The event concluded with a powerful message to students – regardless of the challenges posed by today's changing legal landscape, the role of the attorney is to help others and there are more people than ever in need of legal representation.



William M. Hoeverler Award Roundtable

On Tuesday, October 20, the Center hosted its annual William M. Hoeverler Award Ceremony via Zoom. This year's award went to investigative reporter Julie K. Brown. Students got to hear from a pool of questions regarding her journalism career including her reporting on the Jeffrey Epstein case. Julie also discussed her reporting on prison reform. Ethics Fellow Alexa Garcia and Maria Mejia co-moderated the event.

Julie discussed in depth on how she began to cover the Epstein case and her exposing of Alex Acosta. Julie provided a timeline and offered students insight on why her reporting was so crucial to exposing the way the case was mishandled. The students were able to hear Julie's take on the conduct of prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges. The event concluded with an award presentation by Professor Alfieri and closing remarks by Dean Varona. Julie left the students with a message on the importance of reporting on the inadequacies of the criminal justice system.



Community Equity Lab Fellows



Odette Ponce – Chaykin Fellow, 2L

Odette was born in Havana, Cuba, and grew up in Miami, FL. She graduated from Florida International University in 2013 with a B.A. in Cultural Anthropology. She completed a Master of Public Health from Boston University School of Public Health with a dual concentration in Global Health and Health Law, Bioethics, and Human Rights. Before law school, Odette was a Senior Program Associate at New England International Donors and focused on building their peer-to-peer education platform for donors interested in international philanthropy and the giving circle program. In her spare time, she is an avid rock climber and enjoys learning flamenco.



Christopher Gray – Catsman Fellow, 2L

Chris was born and raised in Chatham, IL. He graduated from the University of Louisville in 2012 with a B.A. in English. He also received his commission into the United States Air Force (USAF) in 2012 as a distinguished graduate through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University of Louisville. Over the course of seven years, Chris served as a Logistics Readiness Officer in Arizona, South Korea, and Singapore, with a deployment to Kuwait in 2015 in support of coalition military operations in Iraq and Syria. His major military awards include the USAF Meritorious Service Medal, the USAF Commendation Medal (3x), and the USAF Achievement Medal (2x). Moreover, Chris earned a M.A. in International Security Studies from the University of Arizona in 2015. Chris separated from the USAF in 2019 to pursue a Juris Doctorate at the University of Miami School of Law. He is entering his second year of law school in the fall of 2020.



Timothy Loftus – Hoeveler Fellow, 3L

Timothy Loftus, M.D. is entering his final year at the University of Miami School of Law. This past summer, he helped spearhead the Community Equity Lab's launch of a long-term project to address health disparities in Miami-Dade County. During his second year of law school, he worked with the Florida Health Justice Project focusing on healthcare accessibility for low-income Floridians. Prior to law school, Dr. Loftus served as vice president of a healthcare software startup integrating home health data into electronic medical records. He obtained his B.S. in Chemistry with highest distinction and magna cum laude from the University of Illinois and his M.D. from Washington University in St. Louis. He did post-graduate training in emergency medicine at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, The University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell. He is a native of Springfield, IL and is often asked how he chose Miami Law. "I visited my grandparents in south Florida in 1985 and envisioned living here ever since. I only applied to Miami Law with the intent to remain in South Florida permanently." He is an avid runner and is continuously expanding his culinary skills. He looks forward to resuming international travel again soon.

Legal Profession Program Fellows



Leandra Lopez – Catsman Fellow, 2L

Leandra studied Political Science at the University of Miami. She spent last summer as a Fellow for the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute and was a law clerk at a commercial and civil litigation firm. She was also a research assistant to Professor Kathleen Claussen. Leandra is the President of Miami Law's Cuban American Bar Association chapter; Vice President of the International Law Society; Senator in the Student Bar Association; and is a Pin Pal Mentor. She is also a candidate for the University of Miami Business Law Review and a member of the Society of Bar and Gavel.



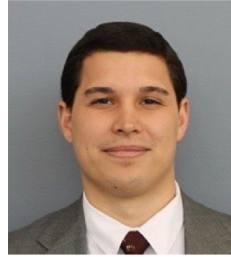
Connor Evans – Catsman Fellow, 2L

Connor graduated from Temple University in 2018 with a B.S. in public health. While at Temple, Connor volunteered with various nonprofits, including the Fox Chase Cancer Center and the Susan G. Komen foundation. Before starting at Miami Law, he worked as a doctoral admissions coordinator at Temple University's Fox School of Business and Management. His interests include litigation, commercial law, golf, and scuba diving.



Maria Mejia – Catsman Fellow, 2L

Maria is pursuing a career in transactional law. Maria spent her 1L summer as a law clerk for the consumer unit at Legal Services of Greater Miami. She is currently serving as secretary for the International Law Society and is a proud member of Hispanic Law Student Association and Miami Law Women. Ecuadorian-born, Maria worked before law school as a domestic violence advocate and was a judicial assistant in the 11th Judicial Circuit of Florida.



Daniel Mayor – Catsman Fellow, 2L

Daniel is enrolled in the Sports & Entertainment LL.M. program. He is a graduate of Northwestern University with a major in Communication Studies and a minor in Economics. During his undergraduate studies, he had the opportunity to work in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals Staff Attorney's Office. This experience, along with opportunities to in the Washington, D.C. offices of Senator Cory Booker and Senator Charles Schumer, reinforced his passion for public service that motivated him to work with CEPS. On campus, he was also selected to join the University of Miami Law Review and participate as an UPLIFT Community Mentor. He is interested in pursuing opportunities in the "big law"/corporate world following graduation.



Alexa Garcia – Catsman Fellow, 2L

Born and raised in Miami, FL, Alexa attended Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart. She then attended the University of Miami where she earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Journalism and Political Science while minoring in Modern Languages and graduating Cum Laude. Alexa is a staff editor for the Inter-American Law Review, a member of the UM Chapter of the Cuban American Bar Association, and a member of the Hispanic National Bar Association. Alexa also volunteered for a Miami Law legal writing program at Dade Correctional Institution. Alexa is currently a judicial intern at the Third District Court of Appeal with Judge Ivan Fernandez. In this role, she makes recommendations to the judge through bench memorandums and extensive research findings. She is also an intern at the UM Health Rights Clinic, advocating for clients' social security benefits and representing them in immigration matters."



Jillian Kushner –Catsman Fellow, 2L

Jillian graduated from The University of Texas with a B.J. in Journalism with a focus on sports broadcasting. Prior to law school, she worked as a paralegal at an employment and civil rights law firm doing plaintiff-side litigation. Jillian is interested in pursuing a career in criminal law, and she is currently in the Miami Law Innocence Clinic. Outside of law school, Jillian enjoys spending time with her dogs, watching Texas football, and fitness.

OUR MISSION

Founded in 1996, the **Center for Ethics and Public Service** (CEPS) is an interdisciplinary education, skills training, and community engagement program devoted to the values of ethical judgment, professional responsibility, and public service in law and society. The Center's mission is to educate law students to serve their communities as citizen lawyers.

The Center operates three projects: the **Community Equity, Innovation, and Resource Lab**, the **Historic Black Church Program**, and the **Legal Profession Program**. Project faculty, staff, and students collaborate with schools across the University of Miami as well as the Florida bar and bench; anti-poverty, civil rights, and environmental and public health organizations; and faith-based groups, nonprofit corporations, and civic and neighborhood associations.

Since 1996, Center faculty and staff have trained more than 1,310 graduate and undergraduate fellows and interns, and collaborated with more than 47,000 civic leaders in ethics and professionalism programs as well as anti-poverty, civil rights, environmental justice, and public health campaigns. Center faculty also have been widely cited in law journals and in the media

CEPS

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WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW?

Kiana Courtney, CEPS/EJC Fellow 2017-2019

Kiana Courtney is a Staff Attorney at the Environmental Law & Policy Center, working on clean energy and natural resource protection litigation, rulemaking, and policy. ELPC is a Midwest-based environmental advocacy organization. Some of her projects include fighting for rules that will protect communities and groundwater as IL's coal companies clean up their coal ash pollution, a Clean Water Act case against a steel company that killed approximately 3,000 fish in the Lake Michigan basin, a series of challenges to stop the renewal of an aging oil pipeline that would be placed in the Straits of Mackinac for 99 years, publishing reports monitoring the reduction in the enforcement activities of the US EPA, and advocating for change in Chicago communities based on data gathered from ELPC's community science air quality monitoring program. Kiana is currently based in Chicago, IL, but her work extends across Midwestern states.

