

**University of Virginia School of Law
Arthur J. Morris Law Library | Archives & Special Collections**

Oral History Interview Transcript
Cover Sheet

Narrator: Sujaya Rajguru

Interviewers: Addie Patrick, Randi Flaherty, Sujata Bajracharya

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Other People Present:

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Project Abstract: The Virginia Law Women 50 oral history project is part of the VLW 50th anniversary. The oral history project focus was on interviewing VLW leadership, and includes interviews with VLW past presidents from the 1970s through 2022.

Interview Abstract: Oral history interview of Sujaya Rajguru, class of 2022, via Zoom, on March 28, 2022. Rajguru discussed VLW programs and activities supporting women law students' education and career interests, as well as VLW administration issues.

Beginning of interview

Addie Patrick: Okay, good afternoon everyone. My name is Addie Patrick. I'm the Library coordinator here at the UVA [University of Virginia Arthur J. Morris] Law Library and today is March twenty-eighth, Monday, March 28, 2022. And we are here doing an oral history interview for Virginia Law Women Fifty with Sujaya Rajguru and Sujata Bajracharya. I'm sorry if I butchered that. So to get started, let's just go around and introduce ourselves. Starting with Randi.

Randi Flaherty: I am Randi Flaherty. I'm Head of Special Collections at the UVA Law Library and I'm Zooming in from the Law Library in Charlottesville [Virginia].

Sujata Bajracharya: I am Sujata Bajracharya I am 2L at the [UVA] Law School and I was one of the professional programs co-chairs for VLW [Virginia Law Women] this year. I'm also Zooming in from Charlottesville.

Sujaya Rajguru: Hi, I'm Sujaya. I'm a 3L at UVA Law and I'm the outgoing VLW president. And I'm Zooming in from Charlottesville, Virginia, as well.

Addie Patrick: And Sujaya you're graduating this year, right? Did you say that already?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes. I said 3L, but yes, graduating this year.

Addie Patrick: And I'm Zooming in from Washington, DC. I think I forgot to mention that. Okay, so I'm just going to ask the first question. Sujaya, why did you decide to join Virginia Law Women?

Sujaya Rajguru: So, I think my introduction to Virginia Law Women was kind of serendipitous, I guess you could say. So, when I was touring law schools, in college, I toured Georgetown Law [School], and I ran into a woman student there, and I mentioned, "Oh, I also applied to UVA Law." And she's like, "Oh, one of my good friends goes to UVA Law, I'll put you in touch with her." She was super nice. She sent me an introductory email. And that introductory email was to Kendall Burchard, who was the current VLW president. And so then, later that year, I was admitted to UVA Law. It was actually the only school we didn't tour before I was admitted, because we didn't think I'd get in here. And so we went and toured late November. And I reached out to Kendall. And so I met up with her at admitted students—or no, just on my tour, it wasn't at any particular event. And I think that's when I first heard about Virginia Law Women. Also, on that visit, I sat in on a class and I—Kendall was like, "Oh, which one are you sitting in on? I can have you sit next to someone." And of course the person who I sat next to was Manal Cheema, the incoming VLW president. And so really, from the start, from that day, they have been incredible mentors to me and women that I really look up to so much. And so seeing them in the positions of leadership in VLW really, from that time, I thought, If I come here, I want to be VLW president. So yes, that's how I first heard about VLW.

Sujata Bajracharya: So I guess that you already responded to this to some degree, but once you started school, what was your sort of first impression of VLW as an overall organization?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, I guess it kind of seemed like, a place where I would belong. Like it could be my group. In college for me, that was band. And obviously, the Law School doesn't really have a marching band. And so it seemed like like and ended up being a place where I could find mentors. And, you know, people similar to myself. I was also in a few women's groups in college. And so it seemed like a place I could find that community. Yes, and it just seemed really well established as well. They were very organized. They had a good outline bank, once I knew what an outline was.

Sujata Bajracharya: Yes, and I know you mentioned, well, I guess, I don't know if you mentioned it, but I know that you were a 1L Rep. Can you talk a little bit about joining VLW?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes. So yes, I wanted to be involved in any way I could. And I mean, truly, the long-term goal was that I wanted to be president. So I was like, Okay, here's the first step. So yes, it was kind of natural for me to say this is the organization I want to be involved in and I want to run. Yes, and I mean, I usually I am not very popular. I feel like usually not that successful in elections. But I think I was able to—one of my friends—I was talking about my campaign strategy. There wasn't that much campaigning, but I was talking about it with one of my friends and he was saying like, "Oh, you should like make yourself associated with VLW." So I'd always post in our GroupMe about VLW, I'd post about it on social media. So I tried to make that association.

Sujata Bajracharya: Well, I for one think you're very well regarded in the Law School, so.

Sujaya Rajguru: Well, thank you. [laughs]

Sujata Bajracharya: When you were a 1L, how was VLW structured? And is it in any way different now than it was when you started?

Sujaya Rajguru: I think it's pretty similar. I think part of it is we've been trying to bring some things back post-pandemic, and some things haven't quite come back in the same way they were. The committees I think were maybe more active my 1L year, which, you know, made sense because more things were in person. And people had seen things in person the year prior. But yes, I mean, you had the exec board was pretty similar, and the committees and the general body and the general body meetings once a semester, that was pretty similar. I guess the exec board, some changes that were made between my 1L year and now. This previous year, we had our first year of the DEI chairs, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion chairs. So we converted—that was under Nicole Banton's presidency. And so we converted two member at large positions to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion chairs. The member at large is traditionally, I guess, not as much now. But traditionally, the idea was, it's a 3L who can provide some more institutional knowledge to the board, which I do think is of value. But that board is already large. So we didn't necessarily want to add another position and add numbers to the board. And

Nicole also brought up that we didn't necessarily want one person having to kind of carry the weight of that role. So that's why we had two. And then I also—my 1L year, we didn't have an LL.M. [Master of Laws] rep, and then the next year, we didn't have LL.Ms. Because I think that board, my 1L year, added the LL.M. rep position so that their interests were better represented. Yes, I think those are the main differences.

Sujata Bajracharya: That is interesting. And just to clarify, when we're talking about the committees are we specifically talking about the public service and private practice committees? Or are there additional ones that—

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, good question. Yes. Okay. Yes. So actually, my 1L year, we had a public service committee and a private practice committee. So, the public service committee would help with Women in Public Service, and the private practice committee would help with Women in Big Law. And now since then, we've expanded to have firm lunches and Women in Government. And so now in theory, those committees would help with those events as well, but they're kind of smaller. And then actually, my year, I was the only 3L on the board, because we had a 2L member at large, which worked very well. But I wanted to kind of have some more institutional knowledge, especially because no one else on my board had ever experienced in-person events. And so I did form a 3L advisory committee. So, it was in the email for anyone who just wanted to be a little more involved. And I reached out personally to the outgoing board members from my 2L year. And so we formed that committee. And it was helpful if I wanted to put together tips about OGI [On Grounds Interviews] for the membership, or, you know, kind of have a few more 3Ls fill out certain forms, because they, you know, missed it in the email, I was able to kind of reach out to them. And in theory, the other board members could have reached out to them to plan their events, but I don't know exactly how much they use them for that purpose.

Sujata Bajracharya: Yes, I will say that Maggie [Woodward] was, who was on the 3L committee, and was one of the professional programs co-chairs before me, was a great help. So I was glad that she was available. This is jumping a little bit, but since you sort of brought it up already, I wanted to ask about how COVID has sort of affected or shaped your presidency? And yes.

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, actually, you know, I was just talking to Kendall the other day, and she's like, "Yes, and I forgot your presidency using COVID." I was like, "Oh, yes." That's not something that other years—if I compare my experience to other years, that's just a whole hurdle that anyone besides—I guess, Manal and Nicole Banton also had that, but besides that, no one else has experienced this type of hurdle. I think one thing that was difficult, I guess one thing that I guess helped, was in Nicole's year, I think there was a lot more uncertainty. Because, I mean, there was just less we knew about the virus and the pandemic in general. We were doing virtual events and Zoom, kind of for the first time, and so we were able to figure out how to do virtual events successfully that year, I think. So, we had that background. But still, when we came to my year, every semester, we kind of weren't able to plan things in detail, as in advance, as other years, because we didn't know what the COVID restrictions would be. For example, we didn't know if we'd be allowed to have food at events, if you had to have it after event, or not at all, what the masking policy was, how many people you could have together, if it had to be outside or in a room. And then when it got cold, it's harder to have things

outside. So Sujata, that's something you've definitely experienced in planning Women in Public Service. So, I think that was one of the main hurdles. And also, I think building community was maybe a little more difficult without kind of the side conversations after events, if things were virtual. But, I guess, one of my goals this year, since we were able to do some more things in person, was to make sure we built up institutional knowledge from past—that I was able to pass on all the institutional knowledge to the people who would be at this Law School after me. So I tried to include a factor in how we planned events, like, "Do we want to show everyone how this was done previously?" Let me just tell you all like, "This is what we did, just so you know, and you can take that into account." So, I think that also changed things, that that was kind of a goal I had. And maybe if that wasn't the case, I wouldn't have thought as much about what we'd done previously, and would have been more—I was still open to doing things differently, based on what the board said. But I think I probably would have been even more open to doing things very differently, if I hadn't thought, Well, I think people need to know how things were at least done previously. Yes.

Sujata Bajracharya: Yes, and you've mentioned, sort of, you trying to make sure there was institutional knowledge about the events that had gone on previously. So maybe it's a good time to talk about events. What were the VLW programs during your presidency?

Sujaya Rajguru: I will pull up the term card, so I don't miss anything [looks at her computer screen]. Okay, so in the summer, we did the Summer in the City events virtually, which I think actually ended up being more inclusive, because they used to be—and they may be this year—in person, in New York, [Washington], D.C., wherever we kind of have a good amount of VLW members. But this way, everyone got to participate in those. So that's for admitted students and current students. And then we also did a virtual game night in the summer, which was new. We thought that could be a fun time for alums to come back and maybe see each other, but it ended up being kind of at another admitted students event, which was fine, I think it was a good time. And we also started, throughout the year, a networking raffle. So I wanted to find a way to encourage women to, you know, not be shy about cold emailing, because I think that's definitely a tendency. I mean, it's something I've experienced. And so I thought, well, maybe if you offer a prize for sending a screenshot of your email that you sent to someone you were talking to at a reception, then you'll be more likely to do it. So, we haven't had a ton of participation in it. But it's a fun thing. And I—you know, if it helped just a few people, then it's probably worth it. Orientation lunch, activities fair, general body meetings, those are kind of typical. We did the faculty wine and cheese again, that's something we've done for a few years. So we did it outside this year, and the events co-chairs boxed up the snacks individually. We did golf lessons again. And so those were brought back, and I think those were pretty well attended. We had our diversity and clerkships panel. That has been done previously, but I don't think it was done the last year. So it was good to have that back again, and in the fall rather than the spring. So people could kind of have that information more upfront before they're applying to clerkships. We co-sponsored a few events with other organizations. Our DEI chairs, they hosted an event with DEI, I forget exactly the term but like the DEI positions at firms, to talk about that. So that was a great inaugural event that they did. We had a mentor-mentee mixer in the fall, and then we're going to have a spring garden party in

the spring. We did the clothing swap again, and headshots. We'll be doing those again in the spring, which is exciting. We did two virtual firm lunches. I'm sorry, I'm just kind of going down the laundry list. Maybe I'll try to be a little shorter. Women in Public Service, obviously, faculty student dinner series, both semesters, and we had a book club. That's something we tried to bring back. Women in Big Law that had to be virtual, unfortunately, for Feb club we did Paletines Day, which is inspired by [Parks and Recreation] Leslie Knope's Galentine's Day, so that was a fun little wine night we did at—in the [Caplin] Pavilion Lobby. We did Women in Government virtually. And we did, we're doing a Women's March Madness bracket pool. Oh, we also have an undergraduate mentorship program this year.

Sujata Bajracharya: Which is also new, right?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes. That's also new. Yes.

Sujata Bajracharya: Okay, yes, just hearing it again. Shows how busy VLW was this year. And we talked, you mentioned a little bit earlier about the outline bank. Can you talk a little bit about the resources that VLW provides?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, so yes, that outline bank is probably one of the main ones, I think most people probably pay dues, mainly to have access to the outline bank. Dues are twelve dollars. And I think we've expanded our resources over the years too, especially utilizing our website, and things that are linked in the email. We have a job spreadsheet, which includes every class year, you can put in what summer job you have, and then your post-grad employment. And then alums also fill out a form and that goes into that spreadsheet. So that's just a great networking tool. We have a spreadsheet about clinic information and academic research opportunities. Those are kind of newer, so we're still developing them. We started a professor information form this year, so that students could, if they had questions about how a particular professor does cold calls, or exams, or something, they could talk to someone who had had that professor. That's a new one. And let's see, on the website, we also have resources about—we have tips for networking and for interviewing, particularly for OGI. Some tips about business wear for women. And we just added some a few weeks ago for summer jobs. Yes, so just trying to make all of those very available. There's also some for incoming 1Ls about briefing a case and things like that, too.

Sujata Bajracharya: Yes, on this note, something that I've been thinking about is, if you could talk about how we sort of made people—or members—aware of the resources, and because I think that might be useful for future VLW iterations to know about. Or if you have ideas about how that could be improved, also.

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, I mean, I think that's something I had to accept is at some point, you're not going to reach everyone. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make them drink. So we tried to reach as many people as we could. I think one thing I did this year was, when something was relevant and we had a resource in the weekly email, that was always there, but kind of at the bottom or on the website, I would plug it in the intro paragraph of the email, so people would just see it right away. And then it's like, "Oh, this is relevant to me right now. I now know this is here." So I tried to do that throughout the year. And then I think we also tried to plug the website and the email to

the 1Ls when they came in, just so they knew that here are things VLW offers, whenever you need it. I think having a lot of these things linked in the email every week is useful, because again, people can just refer to it when they need it. I feel like word of mouth is really a good way to get these things around. And so I feel like that might have been more difficult in the past couple years. But I feel like that's probably the best way for people to know what's happening. And it's definitely something that could be improved upon more, because sometimes people will ask questions. I'll be like, "Oh, well, here's this resource that's in the email I send every week." [laughs] And I mean, it's fine. You know, it's a long email. You can't get to—you can't remember everything but in it. But yes, there could definitely be improvement in that area, I think.

Sujata Bajracharya: Yes, and were there. Oh, sorry. With the newer resources, can you share a little bit about the thought process of adding those?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, so I guess two aspects of that. One thing I thought about was how useful certain tips my mentors have given me personally. And I thought, a way to make this more equitable, really, is to make those resources available to everyone, and easy to find, kind of standardized. And so that was kind of one of my thoughts behind creating these resources. For example, for the journal tryout, I really felt like it was useful for one of my mentors to sit down with me and kind of go through Bluebooking tips. And so I wanted to try to replicate that in some capacity for the 1Ls this year. So we had an info session. And then we also sent out an email with a compilation of tips for the journal tryout, and selecting a journal, and stuff like that. So, that's one perspective I came at it from. And also just kind of thinking about things I would have liked to know, or what things our board would have liked to know. And just kind of sharing that knowledge we have after a year or two of experience in whatever that area is. And that's not something I began, as well. Interviewing tips were already on the website when I came in. So it's kind of easy to duplicate that structure.

Sujata Bajracharya: You talked a little bit—and I feel like this is also related to thinking about how to expand resources for 1Ls and stuff like that. But can you talk a little bit about—and also with the DEI chairs, I guess that's also relevant—the efforts to appeal to different communities and identities within the Law School?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, so I think this has been something that VLW has really been working on over the past few years. And, you know, there's probably always more that we could do. And I look forward to seeing the different ideas people come up with, as time goes on. I think having a diverse board really helped, in the past few years, we've had very diverse leadership. And I do feel like that probably made people feel like this is an organization for me, if they saw someone that was like them on the leadership team. I think something we did really well this year was co-sponsoring events with other affinity groups. For example, the diversity in clerkship event, I think, that one I would love to see that, this type of structure duplicated in other events. We were feeling—we were talking to our alumnae base and looking at our alumnae base for speakers for the event. And you know, a lot of our alums are white women. We did have some white women on the panel, they were really great resources, but we definitely wanted more diverse voices represented. So Brecken [Petty], who planned that event as the member at large, she reached out to the other affinity groups and said, "We're having this event, would you be interested in co-sponsoring? And do you have—is there an alum that you

think would be a good fit for this event from your organization?" And so we almost had someone from BLSA [Black Law Students Association], but I think they ended up not being available for that date. We ended up having someone from LALO's [Latin American Law Organization] alumni base. And then LALO also co-sponsored the event. So I think that's been a really good thing to do. I know, in the past, presidents have sent an invitation to the general body meeting to the leaders of affinity groups. And that's also been helpful. And just having the representation of different groups or people involved and other affinity groups on the board, that's kind of helpful to coordinate our programming and make sure, Oh we're not doing this thing at the same time as this other group. Or, you know, kind of just knowing when we're making decisions about any initiative, if this is something that is going to, you know, appeal to our broad membership and the diverse perspectives that we have, if that makes sense.

Sujata Bajracharya: Yes, absolutely. And I guess this is a little bit the flip side of that, but can you describe the level of support that VLW received from like other students, other student groups, and the administration this year?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes. I think we've generally had a good relationship working with other student groups. I think the only potentially not as smooth working with groups in our political climate, currently, it's kind of difficult to work with political groups, especially with VLW's apolitical status. So sometimes those interests may not align quite right. So I would say maybe that would be the only thing as far as student groups go. And as far as the administration, I think the administration knows, the large membership VLW has and the impact that we have on the student body. You know, just the programming and resources we offer to such a large number of individuals. And I think they're aware of that. So, you know, for example, our funding, we had sufficient funding this year for our programming. We also received donations from firms. So that's some support we receive. I think when it comes to institutional changes, the administration tends to be hesitant. So that would maybe be a little bit of the flip side of that support.

Sujata Bajracharya: Okay, and what did the transition—well, I guess you're sort of in the process of transitioning right now. And so I guess, first of all, what did the transition from Nicole to you look like? And then also, what has it been like with this transition to Brecken now?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, so just kind of the standard way we do transitions, at least at this point in time: every position or person, depending on the events they planned, submits a transition memo. And our board this year submitted very thorough, thoughtful memos. I was really impressed honestly. And so they send that to the incoming—the president, gmail, and the incoming people for their position. And they schedule a transition meeting with them. The transition meeting is attended by the incoming and outgoing board members of that position, as well as the current president and the outgoing president, if possible. So I had them all schedule the meetings based on all of their schedules. And then if I was free, then I attended, but I didn't put my schedule into account, because I was a lower priority to—I was just kind of helping with the brainstorming and institutional knowledge at those types of meetings. So that's generally just how the transition process works. And this year, I tried to spread out the meetings a little more, especially for Brecken's sake. Well, they ended up being kind of clustered together anyway. But I had some people submit the transition memo a little

earlier, and some a little later, depending on their responsibilities. And for the president transition, in particular, that transition memo was very long. I think, usually, there may be, what would you say Sujata? Like five pages? Yes, so the president transition memo is a reference document and it's twenty-five pages, so it's a lot. And I also feel like there's a lot of kind of intangibles to get across that I wanted to get across to Brecken in our transition. And I mean, Nicole, and I we did ours over Zoom because she wasn't in Virginia at the time because of the pandemic. And so, I remember that it was kind of hard to get through all the material and we had to meet twice. So, with Brecken, I was like, "How about you just come over and we'll have a glass of wine, and we'll just talk through this transition memo." So that is what we did. And so it was a few hours, we talked and discussed everything. But she had read the whole thing in advance and made notes and everything. I was very impressed. And she had questions and those got answered. And so basically, after spring break, that was right before spring break, after spring break, I had her start sending the weekly emails. And that's pretty much, after that in the transition meetings, I would say it's pretty officially transitioned. I wouldn't say I am overseeing anything at this point.

Sujata Bajracharya: Okay, and so at this point, reflecting back on your presidency, what do you feel like were your greatest successes, and what do you feel like was particularly challenging?

Sujaya Rajguru: Well, I am pretty proud of the year we had. I feel like I do really do tend to be self-critical, but I'm really happy with what myself and the board did for VLW this year. I guess one number I'm proud of is we have about three hundred dues paying members, which—last year I think was a little lower than usual, but it's double, almost, last year's numbers, which is really exciting because that tells me that that many women feel like this is a place for them. Or they at least think that the outline bank would be useful, which is also fine. [laughs] I think I'm really proud of actually this VLW Fifty project. I was a history major in college. And so this type of thing is really right up my alley. So I'm kind of glad that I was president in the year that this was happening. And so I'm proud that we, I mean, mostly actually, you all the Special Collections, the Library, have put together the VLW Fifty website, and we're doing these oral history interviews, and we had enough interest from the board to help with that where needed. And I think people were kind of excited about it. And we also did the VLW Fifty sweatshirts along with this. And that was—there's a few things this year, like pretty much all the new ideas I was mentioning, they were things I had had ideas about for the past year or two years. And they were just ideas. And so it's been really cool to see things like that. Like the sweatshirts actually come to life. So I'd say yes, that's probably one of the things I'm the most proud of. Yes, how the organization has grown. And this project. I think this is the main thing I oversaw more personally.

Sujaya Rajguru: And then the biggest challenges. I think, I would say kind of, generally speaking, is the apolitical status of organization. That kind of leads to the most difficult-to-navigate situations. So, I think this has come up in the potential to do events with some of the more political organizations on Grounds. That's been kind of difficult. Not only just concretely in my actions, but in kind of just thinking about how VLW or myself

would be perceived for wanting to do something with this group, or that group, or not this group and not that group.

[segment redacted]

Sujaya Rajguru: And then with the DEI chairs. I think my main goal with DEI and VLW, my main thing I'm thinking of in that, and in any context, is what best serves our members. That's my primary thought when I'm thinking about what the best decision is. And so with DEI I thought, Okay, what makes all of our members feel included and is serving all of our members best and their different needs and interests and perspectives? But I think when you talk about DEI, we kind of were in a tricky spot early on in this year, and trying to also be advocates and advocates for how many things? And I mean, as you saw, our board does so much. You know you have to draw a line somewhere. And it's where is that line. Of course, every issue affects women in some way. But we have other organizations at this school that discuss, you know, world issues and issues that concern women and other groups. And so I think it was difficult early on, to decide what to speak on and in what capacity. More specifically, in our emails, we have anti-racism resources at the beginning. So Nicole had a long list of them at the beginning. And that was the first time we had done that, especially with the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. And so for me, I thought we should shorten this list and maybe vary it every so often. So then it's kind of more accessible for people to read. And so we started doing that. And I think me and some of the other board members had different conceptions of what VLW should speak on or not. And then that gets difficult because people also just have different views on particular issues. And so then it's like, Well, what stance should we take and how do we decide what stance we should take?

[segment redacted]

Sujata Bajracharya: No, I think that that was helpful. And actually wanted to go back and talk a little bit about some of the projects that you mentioned. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about how the VLW Fifty project sort of got started on our end. And then also, I wanted to ask you about sort of the period campaign drive that you're doing, since you mentioned sort of advocacy?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes. So the VLW Fifty project. So there was an email in the inbox, I think, from when Nicole was president, that you know, it's just something that slipped through the cracks. I think one of you probably emailed us, and were saying, we did this interview with the founder of VLW, would you be interested in, you know, doing some sort of project with the Library to commemorate VLW's fiftieth anniversary? And so then when I took the presidency, then, you know, again, like I said, based on my background, that was something that personally interested me, and I did think it was important to commemorate it. Yes, I, so then I reached out and established a connection with Addie and Randi and we had some meetings about what we wanted this to look like. Oh, another key piece of our involvement. So UVA Law Communications, put out a piece about VLW's fiftieth anniversary. And based on the information that they found or was available to them, it did largely focus on white women's contributions to the organization. And it focused a lot on the founder, which makes sense, because that's the oral history that had been done. But I think Nicole and other people I talked to from

VLW, you know, were disappointed that, you know, it was kind of miss—it had a missing piece. They felt that it had a missing piece. And that was the voice of women of color. And so with this project, something that I had said early on, was that I really would love to see more of a comprehensive history of VLW and to know what the contributions of women of color were to this organization, and what the dynamics have been. Really realistically. For example, I think for our knowledge, Manal could have been the first woman of color president. But it turns out that that's not true. So anyway, that was also a piece that drove me at least to want to have this project happen to be able to tell that more full story. So hopefully, there'll be a piece in UVA Law Communications in the near future to give that more full story.

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes. And then the period initiative. Yes, okay. So when I was—there's a few, somewhat advocacy or new initiative type of things that we had tabled in the fall. And so then at our January or February meeting in the spring, I brought all of those up and was like, “We don't have much time left, I know, you know, we're probably all close to capacity. But what type of things do we want to work on?” And so one of those things that I had looked into—I remembered my 1L year that there had been some talk in the SBA [University of Virginia Student Bar Association] women's committee about trying to provide menstrual products in the restrooms in the Law School. And I remembered hearing about it, but wasn't really sure what had kind of come of it. I mean, there weren't any in the restroom. So I knew that much. [laughs] So I reached out to the person who I thought had said something about it. And we met and she told me things had kind of fallen off because of COVID, which, you know, many things did. But she told me kind of their general plan that they had had for advocacy. And apparently, SBA had asked a few years back if they could have products in the restrooms, and they had been told no. And so that's why—I'm sorry, I'm not telling the story chronologically. And so that's why the women's committee my 1L year had kind of come up with a plan. So their ideas were to do a drive for menstrual products and put the box in a place where administrators would see it. And so then we did actually do that and we donated the products to SHE [Shelter for Help in Emergency in Charlottesville, Virginia]. I would have to look up—I don't exactly know the acronym. Do you remember, Sujata?

Sujata Bajracharya: Yes, Shelter for Help in Emergency.

Sujaya Rajguru: Okay, thank you. Yes, so we did that drive. It was actually really successful. That was really exciting. So I think they were going to do that in conjunction with a different step. But I wanted to have this board take affirmative steps toward this initiative, so that I wasn't just handing off something that hadn't had anything concretely done to the next board. And their other idea was a petition and research about what other T-fourteen schools did. And so I presented that to the board and it was actually something that everyone was really passionate about, and was like, “Well, yes, we should definitely have these in the restrooms. We have toilet paper.” Anyway, and so, on that front, we did the drive. And we wanted to gather more information before taking any more steps. And so I reached out to the [Law] Library, because the Library actually, you guys provide, or anyways—I don't know if you guys technically make sense. But anyway, the Library provides menstrual products and baskets near the circulation desk. And actually now as of spring break, the Library provides menstrual products in at least the all gender and women's restrooms in the Library. I don't know about the men's,

since I've not been in the men's restroom. But—so that's really exciting, actually. I'm sorry, I kind of lost my train of thought. Okay, yes. So I talked to the Library about where those come from, and apparently it comes from the Library's budget. And then I emailed Student Affairs [at the UVA Law School] and asked if that's something—I asked about the ones in the Library at first, because I wasn't sure. I was just asking both people where that was funded. And I asked Student Affairs about that. And then if they could be provided in other restrooms, and in so many words, I was told no. And so I mean, that was kind of—if they had just said, "Yes," that would have been pretty easy, but they didn't. And so now, I think the new board is also very passionate about this project. And they'll be taking more steps to, I think, gather information and raise awareness about it, and hopefully actually create some change. The [UVA] Business School, and the undergrads, I'm pretty sure have them.

[segment redacted]

Sujata Bajracharya: I'm glad that we talked about this, because I feel like it's a very important project. And I wanted to make sure that we got this recorded as well. Okay, since we're getting a little bit closer towards the end, I wanted to ask about how you reflect on your experience in VLW and also if there any specific relationships that you've built with members? You talked a little bit about Manal and Nicole, but just if there are other mentorships or support systems that you've got through VLW?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes. Maybe I'll start the second question first. So yes, I did already talk about Kendall and Manal. Yes, those are definitely really important relationships I built through VLW, essentially. I think I wish I had gotten to spend more time in person with the board my 2L year, because I feel like I didn't really get a chance to know everyone super well, if I didn't already know them. Well, Maggie, for example, she was on that board, and she's in my section. So I would say we've had a close relationship outside of VLW, but also in it. I-she's someone who I've actually kind of run things by even this year as president. just kind of as an outside source of information or, you know, another opinion. So we've been really close. And that's been really wonderful. And also mentees I've met through VLW. That's been really wonderful to kind of have the roles flipped as well. And my board this year, everyone, I was really, really lucky to have very kind, mature, dedicated individuals on the board. And I mean, I would consider myself at least acquaintances with all of them. Law School is busy, so I can't say we've all hung out one-on-one at a time. But yes, those are also really important relationships. Can you remind me the first part of the question?

Sujata Bajracharya: It was more general, just sort of how you reflect on your experience in VLW. And I guess I'll also link in just if there's anything that you wanted to talk about that we haven't touched on yet?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes. Yes. So being president of VLW is definitely my favorite thing and the most fulfilling thing that I've done in law school. I think for me, law school really has been difficult. I guess it's difficult for everyone. But academically, it's been very difficult. And some of the things we have to do have not felt super directly connected to my career interests, and you know, civil rights and social justice and things like that. And it can also-it's kind of hard sometimes I think, to be preparing for an exam when it's, you know, the grade is just for you at that point. And you're kind of at a point where you

want to be serving others. And so VLW was really cool, because I really had the chance to serve others in a very concrete and impactful way. And I have the chance to shape the organization, which is something I've never really had the chance to do before. I've never been in kind of a—everything came back to me at one point as president, the way the organization is structured. And the board is very much a team, and we vote on lots of things, but still, the final decision would, you know, come to me. Or if someone had questions, eventually the question would come to me. And I was able to say, "Oh, how about we do this?" And then the board is like, "Yes, that sounds great. Let's do it." And we figured out how to do it. Yes, so it was really, really cool to be able to do that. To the extent that I feel in my future career, I'd love to, I don't know—if I could be VLW president, somehow, in my career in the future, I think that would be fun. But to be in an administrative role, or to—the delegating, and the planning, and that type of thing, I think I found actually plays really well to my skill set, and is just really, really fulfilling to me. And even just working with the board, that type of interaction, I think, is really enjoyable for me. So I think that's kind of how I would really reflect personally. And we already talked about the things I'm proud of that our organization does, so I won't repeat myself there.

Sujata Bajracharya: Okay, thank you. I'm just going to hand it back to Addie and Randi, if they have anything that they wanted to follow up on.

Randi Flaherty: Well I could build off of your last answer. I was wondering where you think Virginia Law Women makes the biggest impact?

Sujaya Rajguru: I think I would say, in part because people are kind of most tuned in to things they're 1L year, I think it makes the biggest impact for 1Ls academically. Especially now we have a 1L listserv that the scholarship chair runs, and she's given kind of tips throughout the year. Maybe not even academically, I would say it probably makes the biggest impact providing support in the 1L year. It provides support through outline bank and academic resources, which we also have a supplement library—I keep thinking of things we've added. Anyways, lots of academic resources, because we remember all the struggles we had going through that year. And also mentorship. Mentors, I think, not only are such an asset for academic things, and job things, but really emotional support. And I know my mentors have had confidence in me when I haven't had confidence in myself, and really encouraged me to pursue different opportunities or, you know help me decide when, you know, that's not an opportunity that's worth my time and things like that. So just providing that type of personal support, because the 1L year I think is really difficult mentally. And so, I think VLW does do a good job of providing that support the 1L year. And I think will continue to do even better as the organization tries to expand the community aspect, especially in a post pandemic world. Yes, I think largely because that's when people use it the most. I think that's the most impactful, because we offer resources at other stages of your career as well. But I think at that point, people have access to more of a variety of resources and mentors. Yes.

Addie Patrick: I have a question about—since, you know, since the organization is so large now, three hundred members plus. I'm curious about—and I don't know exactly how to properly word this question—but I'm curious about sort of gender and Virginia Law Women and how, you know, how is the organization perceived amongst the

entirety of the Law School populace? Because it seems that a lot of the resources you provide don't necessarily have to do with gender, you know, outline bank and that sort of thing.

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, so actually I feel like it's kind of a clear divide in the sense if you operate under the assumption that women are a disadvantaged group. And the point of the resources is to bring women up to the level of more advantaged groups. So I think that's kind of the way the line is drawn in that sense. Because yes, an outline bank is not inherently about gender, but it's about making the opportunities more equal to a group that has been historically disadvantaged. And I mean, there's still, you know, inequality you can see today. But I think especially historically. And it's important to maintain that because, again, you know, maybe because we have these resources, that's what helps even the playing field a little bit more. And I think as far as its perception on Grounds at the Law School, I think sometimes men are wanting to be involved in VLW. Or sometimes men come. A few men came to the diversity and clerkships event. And I mean, that made sense because it was a speaker, and some of those people may be from historically marginalized groups as well. And that would—that was a useful event for them. So VLW does do some things that I think serve the whole student body. At the end of last year, we had not spent a lot of the money in our budget. So I thought, you know, we should try to do something at the end of the year to, you know, make up for some of the events we hadn't gotten to do. So we decided to do finals snacks. I'm always concerned about 1Ls not eating enough during finals. So anyway, we just—two of my board members went to Costco and just bought a ton of snacks. And good stuff, like the Milano cookies and the Starbucks drinks. And we just lined the whole front hallway of the Law School with snacks. They may do it again this year, I'm not sure. Because like I said, we kind of did it because you know, just to make up for events we hadn't done. But that was something that served the whole Law School. And people were really appreciative of it. Dean [Risa] Goluboff actually even posted on her Instagram about it, which I thought was cool. [laughs] And so we do things that serves the whole Law School, and I think people understand that the resources are provided to women in particular, because women are historically marginalized group and people, you know, respect that and think it's a good thing.

Addie Patrick: I have—I know, we're very close to time. And so I don't—I have another question, though, that gets a little bit more into the philosophy of the organization. So you mentioned, and explained quite well, that it's an apolitical organization. And that's in part because there are other organizations that serve, you know, political purposes here at the Law School. But I believe in a previous conversation, you talked about how it is a deliberate decision at the beginning of each year to—whether to go more political or apolitical? Did you have that conversation at the beginning of your presidency?

Sujaya Rajguru: Yes, so I actually think I didn't have it early enough. But in the summer, we did have a meeting where we voted on the constitution and our bylaws, and the co-sponsorship factors. I think Manal talked about that in her interview. But basically, it's a list of factors that a previous board initially drafted. And those help us guide our decision whether to co-sponsor an event or not. So it has things like, is it—are there women on the panel? Would this agitate our membership? Or I don't know, just things like that. Is this a good fit for us, basically. And here's the factors to guide us. And

then, if we're—I mean, unless it's like we're co-sponsoring, you know, a diversity reception or something. That one I, you know, we can, I think that's not very controversial. But for a lot of things that we would co-sponsor, especially with groups that may be perceived as political, then the board votes on it. And I guess, backing up a second, sorry. I tried, in the beginning of my presidency, to vote on more things than I did later, to kind of get an idea of what the board's preferences were. Where do they feel the line is here? And so then later on, sometimes if it wasn't, again, if it wasn't too controversial, then I would maybe just run it by Camille [Boler], my vice president, be like, "Oh, what do you think?" And then often we would agree, or she'd have a new perspective and be like, "Okay, that sounds good. We will include this or won't have this," or something like that. Yes, but when we do vote, we would vote on it. And then I would make the final call on it by looking at the votes and seeing if there's overwhelming support. But that was helpful in a few ways because it was—the idea was it's never one individual making the decision and it's not going to be guided just by individual opinions on anything. It's guided by these concrete factors. Is that helpful?

Addie Patrick: Yes, no, that answered my question. Okay, so we are one minute away. Randi or Sujata do you have any last questions? Okay, I'm seeing head shaking. Well, thank you, Sujaya, for taking the time to talk with us about your experiences. And thank you Sujata, for being the lead interviewer here. I'm going to stop the recording and then we'll tie up any loose ends that we have.

End of interview