

University of Virginia School of Law  
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Oral History Interview Transcript  
Cover Sheet

**Narrators:** Arafat Yinka Balogun, Claudia Cantarella, Montina Cole, Ann Fort, Tonya Lewis Lee, Shireen Lewis, Deborah Cleary Lofton, Tracy Preston

**Interviewers:** Addie Patrick, Abigail Williams, Moksha Padmaraju

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**Project Title:** VLW50

**Project Abstract:** During the 2021-2022 academic year, Law Special Collections and Virginia Law Women (VLW) leadership partnered to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of VLW. The final product is an online exhibit, [vlw50.law.virginia.edu](http://vlw50.law.virginia.edu), that showcases newspaper articles, photographs, and oral history interviews with VLW alumnae.

**Interview Abstract:** Oral history interview with VLW members and leadership from 1986 to 1992, including Arafat Yinka Balogun '89, Claudia Cantarella '91, Montina Cole '91, Ann Fort '91, Tonya Lewis Lee '91, Shireen Lewis '89, Deborah Cleary Lofton '92, and Tracy Preston '91. The group discusses student activism, the curriculum, and building community at the Law School.

### *Beginning of interview*

**Addie Patrick:** Okay, hi everyone. Today is Friday, July 21, 2023. And we are all gathered here today to talk about the history of Virginia Law Women from 1986 to 1992. So, in this conversation, after we introduce ourselves, we'll do what I'm calling a narrative timeline where everybody will have a chance to talk about their time in Virginia Law Women. And then following that, with whatever time we have left, we will have an open discussion and Q&A to answer any questions that came up during our presentation section. So, I'm going to get started with introductions. My name is Addie Patrick. I use she/her pronouns and I am the library coordinator here at the UVA Law Library.

**Randi Flaherty:** And I am Randi Flaherty. I use she/her pronouns and I serve as head of Special Collections and Law School historian at the UVA School of Law and I'm Zooming in from Charlottesville, Virginia.

**Shireen Lewis:** I am Shireen Lewis (class of '89) and I was the chair of the speakers committee from 1988 to 1989 for Virginia Law Women, and I am currently the executive director of a nonprofit called EduSeed and the founder of EduSeed's program SisterMentors. And I am coming in from Washington, DC, and I use she and her pronouns.

**Arafat Yinka Balogun:** Good morning all, my name is Arafat Yinka Balogun (class of '89). I'm Zooming in from Lagos, Nigeria. I was initially the treasurer when I joined UVA, in '87. And subsequently, the president of Virginia Law Women when I graduated in 1989. I'm presently a partner in Eximia Legal Consultants in Lagos, Nigeria. And I also run a wellness spa, the two seem to run together. There's a high incidence of blood pressure among, high blood pressure, among women in law in Nigeria and in other high-pressure jobs in the communication, telecom industry, so we try and also manage that.

**Claudia Cantarella:** My name is Claudia Cantarella (class of '91). My pronouns are she/her, I graduated from UVA Law School in 1991. I was the head of—co-chair, I think, of the community affairs. And I have been practicing law in New York City for over thirty years. I'm an intellectual property lawyer by training and I am currently the chief legal officer of Broadway Technology, which is a fintech [financial technology] company.

**Ann Fort:** I'm Ann Fort (class of '91), I'm Zooming in from Atlanta, Georgia. I use she/her pronouns. I'm class of 1991 UVA Law as well. I recall being active with VLW all three of my law school years beginning in the fall of 1988. I think I was secretary at least one of those years, maybe more than once. And my current practice is—I've been thirty plus years with the same law firm, now known as Eversheds Sutherland. Working as a

litigator, primarily in intellectual property matters, where I also provide counseling services as well. Thanks for inviting me.

**Tracy Preston:** Hi, I'm Tracy Preston (class of '91). I—oops, I froze. I use the she/her pronouns. I graduated in '91. I'm currently Zooming in from Winston-Salem, North Carolina. I'm currently the general counsel and chief compliance officer at Hanesbrands. Prior to that, I was the general counsel at Neiman Marcus in Dallas. And prior to that I worked at Levi in San Francisco, in house, and prior to that I was in several law firms for various reasons that we all know around the table. Law firms are very interesting. Congratulations, Ann, on all the thirty years at one firm—

**Ann Fort:** I don't know if that's a congratulations or a condolence but— [laughter]

**Tracy Preston:** —and I was very involved in VLW probably my first year as well. I think I was on the speakers committee when I was a 1L. When I was a 2L I was the vice president, and as a 3L I was the president, and ironically, the four of us are all from the same section, Section F, if everyone remembers that [unclear, all speaking].

**Ann Fort:** I have plans to speak about that.

**Tracy Preston:** Okay. [Laughter] Very happy to be here. Thank you for the invitation.

**Montina Cole:** Good morning, everybody. I'm Montina Cole (class of '91). My pronouns are she and her. I'm a 1991 Law grad. During my time in Virginia Law Women, I was first a member of the speakers committee. And then later, in my second and third years, I believe, I became co-chair of the speakers committee with the illustrious Tonya Lewis, who's now Tonya Lee. Currently, I'm principal at Jai Green Consulting, came to this after twenty years of corporate law firm practice, practicing energy law, and then leaving to do some work in the environmental organizations sphere and then some service as a senior attorney in government. But now I lead this consulting practice, which is a sustainability consulting firm that focuses in on integrated climate policy, racial equity and resilience, and the intersections between those things. And as of just yesterday, it was just announced that I'd become an Open Society Foundations Leadership in Government Fellow.

**Claudia Cantarella:** Congratulations, that's awesome!

**Montina Cole:** Thank you. Thank you. So, I'm really pleased to be doing environmental justice work with—wearing that hat as well. It's great to be with everybody.

**Tonya Lewis Lee:** Good morning, forgive my voice, I've lost my voice. I'm Tonya Lewis Lee (class of '91), also class of 1991. I use the pronouns she/her. As Montina said, I was co-chair of the speakers community—the speakers committee at VLW. I think I started as a member. And then, I think I was involved my first and second years, and by my third year, I think I moved on, and I'll talk about that later. I practiced law at a firm for a couple of years in DC, then I segued into a creative life where I became a writer. I've written a few children's books. I'm a filmmaker, I most recently directed and produced a film about the US maternal mortality crisis called *Aftershock*. I'm also an entrepreneur, I

have a vitamin company, and still very much an advocate for women's health, wellness, and equity in general, and just really happy to be here.

**Deborah Lofton:** Hi, I'm Debbie Lofton (class of '92). I was—I use the she/her pronouns and I joined UVA Law in 1989 and immediately found Virginia Law Women. They were my people in the strange world of UVA Law to me. My second year I was vice president and third year was president. Graduated, moved to Philadelphia. I've been practicing corporate law for over thirty years now. I'm currently chief legal officer at Qlik, which is a global software company. Very happy to be here.

**Abigail Williams:** Hi everyone, I'm Abigail Williams (class of '24), current VLW president, I'm going into my 3L year. Last year I was the treasurer and I use she/her pronouns. I am Zooming to you all from LA, and I'm really excited to be here and meet with you all.

**Moksha Padmaraju:** Hi, everyone. My name is Moksha Padmaraju (class of '25), I am a rising 2L. I'm currently the treasurer. Last year, I was the 1L rep. I use she/her pronouns and I am Zooming to you from Sacramento, California, and I'm super happy to be here.

**Addie Patrick:** All right, thank you guys. I'm going to pass it off to Shireen to get us started to talk about where this history sort of began.

**Shireen Lewis:** Okay, thank you so much. So, I'm going to kind of talk in three parts. I'm going to talk about the sort of culture and environment that I kind of—that me and Arafat, that we came in to the Law School in 1986, the fall of 1986. The sort of culture and atmosphere we stepped into, and then what that looked like and how it impacted—and then so that's the first thing, and then second, how it impacted us. And then the third thing I'm going to talk about is how—what we decided to do about what we experienced then. All right? So, Arafat and I came in in the fall of 1986. Several things were happening then, some really hot-button issues, right. So, we came into this—it was basically a sort of one-room schoolhouse, it was not this big, flashy, law firm names on all classrooms that it is today. Basically, it was like a one-room schoolhouse. You can walk into the—one of the main doors and be out of the Law School at another door in like about two seconds. Right? So, what was being [discussed?]? What I remember distinctly that I will never forget is the debate around affirmative action. That was one of the first things that I stepped into. I went to one of these debates. It was like an evening at the Law School. And there were lots of students, there was some faculty. And there was Imani Ellis (class of '88), who was then the president of BLSA [Black Law Students Association]. And she had come from Howard and Imani was this strong, powerful Black woman. And her whole take, her whole attitude was take no prisoners. The debate around affirmative action, when I stepped into that room, what I was hearing was all kinds of stuff about how the reason why in its seventy-three-year-old history, the [Virginia] Law Review did not have one Black person in all of these seventy-three years, the reason why, it was because basically Black people were not intellectually—were intellectually inferior. That's basically—I mean to summarize the whole thing, that's what was being said. Right? And that, of course, the quality of the Law Review would go

down, and how, you know, will lower the standards of the *Law Review* and all this kind of stuff. And I stepped into that, and I was like, Whoa, what is happening here?

Because I came to look to UVA, from a woman's college, right? And that women's college was all empowering. Women were front and center of everything. We understood that we had power, and we were leaders. I also had come, four years before that, from a country in the Caribbean called Trinidad and Tobago, which were run by Black people. Our president, our prime minister, was a Black man who had a PhD from Oxford. All right? Internationally known, a historian who wrote several history books, which were being used in at universities during that time and are still being used in universities today. So, the intersection of my race and gender came together in that room where I was hearing about how Black people are intellectually inferior, basically, that's why they can't get on to *Law Review*. And I—and that was the beginning of trauma and pain throughout the three years at UVA Law School. All right?

Then, of course, we had Doug Leslie. The whole scandal around Doug Leslie and he—the remarks he made about women, Black people, Jews, Italians, you name it. Doug Leslie had some kind of stereotype, racist thing to say about any of these groups. That was another thing when we, you know. Then you had [Post-Conviction Assistance Project] P-CAP, which would come later on, representing [Frazier] Glenn Miller, grand knight of the KKK against a case that Black people in North Carolina had brought against him, so on and on and on. This thing continued throughout my entire three years. And of course, we had faculty who were teaching us from law and economics. The saving grace for me and Arafat was Gary Peller. Gary Peller—Professor Gary Peller was the only person on the faculty who was teaching from a different perspective, a perspective that we could relate to. Talking about poor people, talking about people of color, which are some things that were not being talked about in the other classes, in the classrooms, other classes, Contracts, Torts, uh-uh, none of that. And if it was talked about, it was talked about in not a nice manner, and was always that those people, people of color or poor people would lose. And there was a justification for their loss in a case, or somehow something negative was being said. So, we had Gary Peller, and we worked with Gary, and he is the one who basically kind of kept our spirits strong and kept us going.

So, you have law and economics, you have women—you have lots of people feeling silenced in the classroom, particularly women. Right? We were not called upon and then when we were called upon, it was all the Black students being called upon one day, out of the entire semester. So, one professor will decide, I'm going to call on all these Black students this one day. Right? Not called upon, not made—our voice not being heard, silenced in the classroom. And in that kind of atmosphere, we felt dismissed. We felt that our voices were silenced. That's where the pain and the trauma came in. And to some extent, we didn't know what to do. But we decided to take action when—I think we were involved in the Leslie thing, VLW stepped up and got involved with the whole Leslie—because Arafat said in the [*Virginia Law Weekly*], students had come to her to complain about Doug Leslie. So, we, together with a lot of the other organizations on campus, the Gay and Lesbian Association, the Jewish Law Students Association, BLSA, all the—National Lawyers Guild, we came together and that's the other thing about VLW. We work with other organizations; I would say 99.9 percent of

the time. We were into partnership, collaboration, reaching out to people. That was a big thing for us. So, we got energized around the Leslie thing. And then that wasn't enough. The speaker—Arafat became president after being treasurer with Bettina [Altizer] (class of '88). She—Arafat became president, and Arafat encouraged me to chair the speakers committee. And we were talking to Gary, we were talking to Nancy Ehrenreich (class of '82).

And again, to talk about the atmosphere and culture there were about five, maybe less, or maybe just one—or six women on the faculty at the Law School. So, you had a lack of representation, you had a lack of diversity, in everything that you can think about at the Law School. The speakers committee was our action thing, we decided that we were going to bring in, in the face of law and economics, in the face of what we perceived to be a hostile environment, that we would bring in speakers who had a different viewpoint, who taught law differently. Who taught law from a perspective that we can relate to. So, we brought in critical legal studies people, we brought in feminist legal theory. Right? So, we had people like the first speaker, Mary Joe Frug. We had people like Gary Peller who came in. You have people like Kimberlé [W.] Crenshaw, who, as you see today, is very much in the news, because of critical race theory. She spoke about critical race theory, right? These were the people that we brought in, and these were the people who helped us to feel empowered, who helped us to not—we were not crazy, we were not the crazies at the Law School, right? Speaking up, you know, really trying to get things to change, trying to bring about change, because what we were seeing was wrong. And in spite of whatever attempts to intimidate us, whatever attempts to silence us, we stood strong as women at the Law School and as a diverse group of women at the Law School, who felt that we needed to take action, we needed to bring about change. And that's what the speakers committee had to—

And of course, I have to say—and Debbie's going to talk about this, and Arafat is going to talk about it—the journal, social—it's called [*The Virginia Journal of Social Policy & the Law*, was the brainchild of Arafat—was also pushed by Tracy, Susan Batte (class of '90), Debbie brought it into fut—I think everybody on this call had something to do with that journal. I went up to Harvard, to talk to—because Harvard had a women's law journal. And I went up to Harvard to talk to them about how they got start—how they got the journal started, what are the kinds of things we should do. At the time when we conceived this journal as a women's law journal, of course, administration will come in and say, It's too narrow. And it will come now, Debbie would bring it to fruition, where it will now come to be the *Journal of Social Policy & the Law*. But that journal was the brainchild of Arafat Balogun and came to fruition through VLW.

So, I'm going to stop here, Debbie, I don't know how much time I have left, I think I'm over time, but I'm going to stop here because I want everyone to have—But I think what I want to leave with everyone is that we, all of us on this call, all the women who were in VLW at that time, we worked hard to bring about change. And there is some change at the Law School today, which is because of our efforts. Right? And I know that some of us were—experienced some sort of trauma around the whole experience. You know, and that is something that was a result of what we experienced at the Law School. But let me just say that we worked together, and we worked hard, and we really brought about change at that Law School, which is still here today. Thank you.

**Addie Patrick:** Thank you, Shireen. I think, Claudia, if you want to go ahead and go next. I don't see—I think we lost Arafat for a moment. So, hopefully she'll join us again.

**Claudia Cantarella:** Okay. When I got to the Law School, I—it was—I chose UVA for a lot of reasons, but one of the reasons was because I had understood that it was a really laid-back law school and that people weren't so, like, it wasn't like a Harvard-type place, right? It had this reputation of being really welcoming and friendly and people had a good balance of like quality of life and free time. And it was easy to make—I heard all these wonderful things. And I got there and I was absolutely shocked. If I'd had the fortitude, I probably would have left and pursued something different. I was absolutely shocked when I got there. All most people cared about was playing softball. And there were, it was—there was just no sense of why we were really there, the purpose of why we were going to law school, the kind of change that we can make by being lawyers. No issues were being discussed. And then just surrounded by teachers, professors who were very homogeneous. Really just took a very, like law and economics approach. I mean, getting—the whole Doug Leslie thing to this day just shocks me. One good thing is that I know that he would never have gotten away with it now had he said those things, looking back on that.

But VLW was a lifeline for me, it was—it saved me, and was one of the reasons it kept me there. So, Shireen was—I think a third year, I met her through fellow friends. And we were involved in the Legal Aid Society, which I ended up becoming the executive director of. And that's how I met Shireen. And she basically introduced me to a whole other side of UVA, for which I was very thankful for. And VLW was just an island amidst a very white sea of people who were just not engaged. And VLW was incredible. It was a way for us to bring all the issues to the forefront and make sure that they were primary on people's agenda. These issues were not being discussed in the classroom. We were learning, you know, contracts law, from an economic point of view. There was—just none of the class offerings were there. There were no class offerings that addressed anything having to do with discrimination, women's issues, harassment, none of these things. And it was just a complete lack of diversity on an academic level, in addition to just being—not having that in any aspect of the Law School. So, it wasn't that we just like went to class, right, we lived the Law School experience. And there were just—there were no places for that. And that VLW really, really was that sort of safe haven and the speakers committee bringing all the speakers that we did. Those were the voices of diversity that we didn't get in the classroom. None of the teachers were teaching critical race theory, I don't think Peller was a professor anymore when we—when I got—when we started, right? Yes. So, we didn't have the benefit of at least having him there as a professor. So, VLW, the speakers that we brought, was the only way we were going to be able to get critical legal studies approach and being taught those issues at the Law School. We had to go to VLW, go to these speaking events. And that was the way that we had that exposure. So, I just don't think I would have lasted at UVA had I not had VLW and had the support of the Coalition for Diversity. That was, I think, a primary focus of what we did mostly in our third year, Montana, right? I know, we were just so incredibly involved in all of that that it was a miracle that we ever went to class. But that's all I have to say. I don't—I just—it was very impactful on a personal level for me,

that kept me there and made me decide that it was worthwhile to be a lawyer and to actually not give up and stick with it.

**Ann Fort:** I think I'm next, Ann, is that right? Yes. Hi everybody. I have a couple of further amplifications of some of the things that everyone has already said. I want to share a specific event. A speaker event that I remember quite clearly. When Duncan Kennedy came to speak at our law school, as the guest of the Virginia Law Women, the foremost—what I will just say, one of the foremost voices of the critical legal studies movement at the time. We were assigned, kind of just like a small classroom, to have this event because someone presumed, Oh, there's only a few people who are going to want to come. The room was so full with people wanting to come in and hear this, that Dean [Thomas H.] Jackson arranged, physically, personally, to move the talk to the [Caplin] auditorium. Now, if that's how—you know, a group of some of the country's young, best, and brightest minds react to a theory that has the, you know, that there's nothing to it, that it's not intellectually rigorous, nobody cares about it, right, we belied that view. By the students, the students responded and said, This is something we believe we should know something about. So that was quite possibly one of my proudest moments at the Law School for the entire three years, when that happened.

I—and I thank everybody who was involved in making that happen, because it was a reminder that one of the ways that you make change in a community is by continuing to talk about the things that are important to you. Especially if you are swimming upstream. The repetition, in as many ways as you can think of, to remind people of your experience and your needs in that community, and the needs of people that you care about in that community, that is a huge factor in making change. Why do we have—I mean—this is going to feel a little bit off the beaten path, but I see a connection. People think—people in dozens of states in this country think that everyone who's of legal age should be allowed to consume cannabis however they want to, whenever they want to. When we were in the Law School, in the, you know, late 80s, early 90s, that was crazy talk! Right? No one thought that would ever happen. How did it happen? Because the people who thought it was the right policy just kept talking about it. And that's one of the things I think we did a great job of. We just kept talking about what was important to us.

This Section F breeding ground for participation in VLW—I've thought about it a little bit since Shireen and I reconnected earlier this week. When we came in, in 1988, Tracy and Claudia and Montana and I were all assigned to Section F. And Susan Batte was our—I don't know what her title was, but she was the—she was the mother duck, and we were the ducklings. Section F. And, of course, very active in VLW. And so, I think that was part of us as incoming students seeing that VLW was a viable place for us to put our efforts and energy in building the community that we wanted to see at the Law School. I think a lot of us had the same general impression that Claudia had, that it is a different environment. It's not your typical law school environment. Well, we wanted it to be more than the frat house of law schools. We wanted it to be a kinder, gentler environment to talk about a lot of things and do a lot of things. Yes, if you want to play softball, play softball, but there's lots more to being the not-backstabby law school than playing on your section's softball team.



I also think that our Section F group was galvanized by the fact that we had one of the Contracts professors who very—you know, he was teaching us from the law and economics perspective. And I still have the casebook here in my office, because I just feel like it's sacrilege to throw books away, but. And that got our attention. Right? What we were being taught that the—our—that basically society's major goal should be economic efficiency. Well, how do you define that? And the way that economic efficiency is to be defined, or can be defined, has been reevaluated many times in the thirty years since we were being educated. But we were being educated as though it were—that there was a way of defining it that would never change, that it was a truth. And that it was the best way to organize our society. And we came to school from so many different perspectives, so many different backgrounds. I came from a college, you know, we only had one women's studies class, right? You couldn't major in gender studies in my school in 1985. That was insanity. But I took that one class. Others came from much different intellectual backgrounds. And we were able to sort of help each other learn how to articulate, Why does this not sit right with us? And VLW was an important place to do that. So, thank you for including me.

**Tracy Preston:** Addie, do you want to go back to Arafat since she's back online?

**Addie Patrick:** She asked to go at the end, because she has some weather over there. So, if you'd like to go.

**Tracy Preston:** Sure, no problem. So, I'll start. So, I mean, you're getting a lot of '91 grads in a row, so I'm going to try not to keep repeating the same thing in the atmosphere. I think, when I was looking at some of the history, we went back and read through things. I think the most important thing to me is kind of what Claudia said, the speaker series was the thing that drew me to the organization, because it embraced the other, or the alleged difference. And, we didn't have the intellectually diverse, I mean, diversity is not just people, it's also ways of thinking. And, when you come to law school, we didn't know what we didn't know, right? We thought we're going to learn the law. And, we're told one way, and we're like, going to Ann's point, we didn't think about how our perspectives were being excluded, or even addressed at all. And so, my draw to VLW was the speaker series, because it provided diversity of thought, as well as the people. These are professors at amazing universities, just getting you to think. You might not agree with that particular theory, but the point is, you had the opportunity to hear about it and learn it—truly understand it, versus someone's viewpoint of what it is or what it isn't. From the feminist legal theory to even public interest theory. People—we had people that talked about that, from a public interest perspective and how that impacts poverty in society and things of that sort. Critical legal studies, of which critical race theory is a part of. So, it expanded perspectives and made us more, I think, intellectually diverse, and we could ask the hard questions.

And going to Shireen's point at the beginning, we weren't crazy, we weren't—it wasn't—you felt like, you felt embraced that there was a community, that said, Okay, I'm not the only one thinking this or feeling this, you didn't feel isolated. And so, the organization provided that, I think, and I think what was amazing about VLW was not just diverse by way of people and thought, but also we had men in our organization the first couple of years that we were on. So, it was really just trying to bring people together to bring

through ideas. We were also involved in some of the things that didn't exist at the University as a whole. We were instrumental in drafting and creating the sexual harassment policy for the University. It didn't exist at that time. So, things that you all have the benefit of now, it didn't even exist by way of even a basic policy. And now it seems so, why would you not have a sexual harassment policy? Claudia worked on, from the community affairs, on date rape and explaining that to the law students. I mean, so we did a lot of things, you know, that I think the organization should be very proud of, the history and the legacy between the speaker series and bringing in diverse thought, taking care of women and women's health issues and issues that women face alone, from rape, to sexual harassment to all those things, and how to handle that and what to do and where to go. Those things were, you know, now it seems really kind of table stakes, but those things didn't technically exist. And so, the intersectionality of the people, the thoughts, the issues. This was the organization that did that for many of us as we embarked on our career at the Law School.

I think, again going back to the speaker series, I mean, I—my summer I worked, I think the summer between first and second year, I worked at the NOW [National Organization for Women] Legal Defense [and Education] Fund, now called Legal Momentum. And one of the lawyers that we brought in for speaker—Alison Wetherfield was one of our speakers that—we brought her in just to talk about women's issues and beyond just, you know, the law and economics that we were getting. It's not that there's anything technically wrong with law and economics. But it was presented in a way that that was the only way and had we not asked questions, we didn't even know, we thought that was the law. And yes and no, but you have a right to expand your mind to look at the other things and I would say the thing that was most beneficial was that speaker series, to have Duncan Kennedy and Mary J. Frug and others to come, is to get us to think and ask questions. And I do think, not just for women, but there were people that were—didn't even know that existed. That's how ignorant, if you will, we were upon our education going into the Law School, and had we not had that we would have known nothing different other than, Wow, I can't believe that's all it is to it. So, it was eye-opening. And it was reassuring. So, I think, we all know diversity is an essential part of life. But so is the law. And it needs to be broader. And I think that's what VLW from a legacy perspective, and what you hopefully are benefiting from in your education now is some of the things that we put forth from the journal to the policies that protect you, to the ability to ask questions, and to ask for different ways of looking at things. I think that's—was—kind of if I did go back through my experience, the takeaways for me, and I think the intersectionality of it all, I think is really, really important as well. So, I'll turn it over to the next person.

**Montina Cole:** I think that's me. And I just have to say, thank you so much for everybody—everything you said, it takes me so much back down memory lane. And I also will try not to be duplicative. But at the same time, I do want to very briefly just say a little bit about context, right? Because my experience with VLW really was influenced by and within the context of the times at that time at the Law School. And so, I remember right after arriving, or soon after arriving at the Law School, Senator Strom Thurmond was the speaker at the Law School, major segregationist, racist background. So, you know, welcome to UVA. All the classes were through a particular lens, and I can't even articulate any better than Tracy said, but once we figured out through

bringing in these alternative scholars through the speakers committee, that there was a different way to look at the law was, like, the scales were just taken off your eyes. You know, I mean, we're supposed to have a marketplace of ideas in the legal sphere and law schools, but instead, it was like law and econ had a monopoly. And we were seeing things just through one lens, you know, it's great to have different ideologies, and I'm sorry, different schools of thought, rather, including law and economics. But to the extent that it was so solely focused on that it was like, almost like a fetishization of law and economics to the point where it goes beyond being a school of legal thought to becoming like ideology. So we were kind of having this ideology in a way kind of put on us without even being told that. So, there was that.

But again, it was just such a great breath of fresh air to hear from these other alternative views. It was a great opportunity to meet these other scholars, some of whom have passed on. I remember part of our kind of research in meeting these scholars and trying to invite them to come, I was able to attend the Critical Legal Studies Conference. I think that was in '89 or so. And to have the opportunity to meet Derrick Bell [Jr], one of the people who founded critical race theory, that was phenomenal. He signed my book that was just published—he had just published at that time. So that was really great. But at the Law School, trying to bring that—the speakers program to the Law School, it was not without some stress from—speaking from my perspective, right? Because it was not something that was welcomed, frankly, by the faculty. We even had a professor—one of our professors who mentioned she—when we finally shamed them into coming to the speeches, because a lot of time they wouldn't even come. The faculty wouldn't attend them. So, someone wrote a letter to the *Law Weekly* saying, Look, you all can come out to Strom Thurmond, but we don't see you coming to these lectures. So, then they began to come. And one of the professors later, after attending one, said she was surprised to see so many of her students there. And that's a scary thing, when you had a situation where you had optional blind grading. There was this kind of—this myth that we had blind grading at the Law School, when in fact, when pressed, the administration had to admit that the blind grading policy was optional. So, I remember at one point stuffing the faculty mailboxes with flyers, because we invited everyone to the lectures, and being scared. Being a little scared putting those flyers in the boxes. That was a real thing. So, that was part of the context in which—that framed my experience there.

And that also then led to my experience beyond VLW, and being involved with the Coalition for Diversity. It was—just got to a point where we understood what was going on there, and nothing was really changing. We understood, I won't even go into—everybody's mentioned Professor Leslie, all the horrible things he would say in class. People had, in the past, argued for and asked administration to bring more diversity, both in terms of the faculty, the racial makeup, and also the curriculum, and nothing was really happening. And after all these things that happened that, you all have heard here, it's like, it became too much, it's like, you could—you just couldn't take it anymore, we had to do something. And so many law students had done things prior to us coming in our, in our year, the 1991 class, I felt like we had to do something, I felt like I had to do something. And so, in a way, we kind of took on the baton that was passed to us by the other students who came before us, Shireen and other people too, so many others. And then we got involved in doing things beyond VLW.

So, my involvement with the Coalition for Diversity was something that really kind of started with lobbying the administration for change. It's not as though we just jumped up one day and said, Hey, we want to boycott classes and strike and make a lot of noise. We really tried to come to the administration and talk to them about what our concerns were. And so we did that. And I remember, I guess that was probably the spring of 1990 or so. We had come to the administration with our concerns, that we wanted more diversity in terms of the type of faculty, the racial makeup, and the kind of content in the curriculum, not just law and economics. And we also brought a petition that had been signed by almost, I think it was almost four hundred students, and we presented that to show it's not just a few students, right, this is a broad proportion of the students who want this. Who want diversity. So, we sat down, and we met with them. And I remember—I have some very clear memories, I certainly don't remember everything about my time there. But I have some very clear memories and stark ones.

In that meeting, there's some things that really stand out in my memory, like I said, the spring of 1990 or so. And it was many members of the Coalition for Diversity, including some people who are in this Zoom room, as well as the SBA president at that time, and a couple of other representatives from the Student Bar Association, or from the SBA. And we met with Dean Jackson and about four other faculty members. And one of the things that sticks out in my mind, as we were talking about the need for more alternative faculty and diversified curriculum, is that the dean really focused on bringing alternative scholars would somehow impugn our standards, would lower our standards at the University, which was really something. And standards, by the way, which they could never really articulate in terms of what they meant by merit or standards. And then he also tried to say, Well, we're already diverse in terms of curriculum. He rattled off a lot of different courses that we had to demonstrate so called diversity. But of course, that didn't—that missed the point. And it wasn't really diverse.

And then another thing that remains most stark in my memory from that time, this is probably the most stark memory from that meeting, was our discussion of clinical legal education. Now, clinical legal education was nothing radical at that time. Many other law students had clinics, where students could come in and get practice, hands-on experience with respect to the law, of course, supervised by professors, by real attorneys. But we didn't really have that. Well, the dean said, We really do, you have the trial advocacy classes. And of course, that's not the same thing as having real people that you're working with and working on real cases. So, he tried to say that at first, and then kind of pulled back from that and used another argument that, Well, it's really expensive. You know, the cost, he brought up the cost issue. And then it—this is the point, the defining moment for me in this meeting, at one point, he said, Well, it's not the duty of law students. The Law School should not subsidize students to work for the poor. The Law School should not subsidize students to work for the poor. So, they should not fund these clinical classes for us to get experience, right. It's not our duty to do that. And I just will never forget it, it was really shameful. So, these kind of things, again, context that lead to us really leading—to doing protests and things like that. He did a letter to the Law School community following that meeting, in which he really kind of misconstrued some things, frankly. We ended up doing a response letter to set things straight. But then, after that, it was really on. We had boycotts, we had a rally in Red Square. There was media coverage of it. A lot of folks from the Law School participated

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in it. There was hundreds of students out there. We chose to do this protest on the day that there was actually nationwide protests going on, it was called National Law Student Strike Day, April 4th, or April 7th or so. It was usually around the time that honored the time, the date of MLK's—Martin Luther King Jr's death, his assassination, that's when the student strike day would happen. That's why it was always in the spring of the year in April. So, we chose that day.

And I just remember that first rally that we did, it was glorious, frankly. There were so many students out there. And I remember after that rally, there was a woman—another one these stark memories—a woman who came up to me, she had not been involved in organizing the protests or anything like that. But she came up to me and just said, Thank you so much for what you all did, you all really care about us here at the Law School, we feel like sometimes people don't care. And thank you so much. I don't even know who she was. And I really, frankly, didn't even recognize her. Like I said, she wasn't involved in organizing it. But there was just this flood of like a cathartic release for people, because we provided a mechanism by which people can—could express, you know, the concerns, especially after trying to work with the administration and not getting any traction. So, it was really a cathartic kind of moment, it really kind of—even a moment of celebration, in some ways, I would say. But that was quite a glorious event. And then we went on to have another protest the following year, in 1991, in the spring too, where we added on a teach-in element and brought in some local attorneys and others to do the teach-in when we did our boycott of classes. So, it was really great.

I just feel like—and also I just mentioned, too, that it's not like it was a big grand master plan, where we planned out and organized these things from A to Z. But it's just like we were responding to the context in which we were in. And the more that we did, it seemed like the more students got involved with us, right. The more that we did, and the more that the faculty and the administration responded in the way they did, the more people became involved. So that's—that's really a lot of—some of the key things that defined my experience and my time there. And that—those are the things I think I'll just stop on right there and pass the baton to the next person.

**Tonya Lewis Lee:** I—again, I too want to just say thank you, first of all, to everyone who's here, and it's wonderful to hear all of your experiences. I, like Shireen, came from a women's college to UVA. I was charged up coming from that women's college, where I was told my voice mattered. I came from a school where the pursuit of intellectual thought, ideas, conversation was really important. I didn't really know what I wanted to do with a law degree. But I was there to learn, to be open, to hear different ideas. Like Claudia, I kind of had the expectation that it'll be a little more laid back so that I could really dive into, you know, just legal study and see where it took me. At the same time, I did have a mind's eye to civil rights, human rights, doing something good for people with my law degree. And so, I was there to learn. And I remember when we first get there, we were—as Black students, there was an orientation. And Alex [M.] Johnson [Jr] was the professor who oversaw that. And I think my—the first thing that hit me was that in that orientation, Alex Johnson explained to us that no Black law student had ever graded on to the *Law Review*, because Black students just don't get law and economics. And it wasn't like he was saying, So, you guys should figure it out. It was like, You're not going to figure it out because you all just don't get it. So, that was my

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first introduction, in a way to, Oh, okay, I didn't even—again, I'm like, What are you even talking about, you know, with law and economics?

I was in Section K with Lillian [R.] BeVier. And I remember, I don't remember—there's a lot I don't remember. But I do remember having a conversation—she was our Torts professor, also—and I remember her talking about the reasonable man standard. Again, I was so young and so naive, there's so much I didn't know. And I raised my hand and asked the question about, Well, how do you determine what is a reasonable man? Because for what is reasonable for one man might not be reasonable for another. And the thing that I remember most is the look that she gave me. Because it was like, Oh, you're trouble. What are you asking me? And again, it was really just from—I really just wanted to have the conversation. I wasn't trying to start trouble. I didn't even—I just wanted to understand. And I think from that moment on, it was kind of like, Okay, this one is something else. And I will say, I think that as everyone here—that VLW was a place for me to go where there were like-minded people. And honestly, I don't remember how I found it, I think maybe, because it was Virginia Law Women, I came from a women's college, and I went looking, maybe there were events that were happening, and somehow, I just got involved. And like everybody here, it really was a lifesaver for me, because it gave me a place where I felt that I could pursue other intellectual thought. That I could be useful, that I was not an outlier.

It was often intimidating, obviously, law school in general. But as a Black woman sitting in these classes, it was intimidating to speak up, and to feel that one's voice could be heard. But I did find my way in other ways. I did work at a human rights clinic, and worked with Human Rights Watch, which was amazing being there at the Law School. And also had the opportunity, the summer after my first year, clerk at the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] Legal Defense Fund. And I do want to say here to this group, Elaine Jones (class of '70), who became the head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, was the first Black woman to graduate from the University of Virginia Law School in 1970. So, we stand on her shoulders, by the way, and I—it was not easy for her, if it was not easy for us. I think that the—what we did, and you all have all heard this, so I don't need to fully repeat it. But what we did in bringing those speakers to UVA, and as I look back now, was so powerful, and so disruptive to so many people. And it was a very scary time. This was not an easy thing to do. We were up against so much.

And to the point where I actually was called into the dean's office. My grades weren't terrible, but they weren't awesome, but they weren't terrible. And in fact, in my civil rights law class, I didn't get a great grade because for the final exam, I wrote a critical legal study essay. I was so disgusted, I didn't even care, I just—I was like, I'm going to write, I'm going to write this exam from the point of view of critical legal studies and screw you if you don't like it. But I did get called in to the dean's office at one point where I was told, Oh, Tonya, are you sure you're going to be able to graduate? Are you sure you are going to be able to handle the load here? And I was never worried about my academic ability. I—that was never a question to me ever, ever in my entire intellectual, educational career. And what I got from that is that it was a signal to me, they were telling me, If you don't stop all this nonsense, if you keep going the way you're going, we're going to bring you up on honor code violations. And that was a very

real thing back then, the idea of honor code violations, they used that as a weapon against students. And so, by my third year, I just felt like I needed to be quiet. I needed to get my paper, I needed to get my degree. And I needed to get out of there before they ended a career or an opportunity that I had—that I hadn't even started yet. And so, you know, there's a lot that I don't remember, I do think that there was a lot of traumas that I kind of blocked out to be honest.

And—but I do remember very favorably, the Virginia Law Women's—and I also worked a lot with BLSA. I feel like there was a coalition there. Although I do think that men came in and kind of overtook that. And were kind of pushy as they can be, but we did work together. And, you know, we've talked about Duncan Kennedy and Kimberlé Crenshaw, we brought Charles [J.] Ogletree [Jr] to the School as well. And I am just so grateful that we were able to bring those voices to the University, and I will say it's so interesting because I do remember feeling like I thought the law—I thought it was black and white. When I first got to law school, I thought, Okay, it's the law, right? So, it's either—it is or it isn't. And as we began to learn, it's not. There are so many shades of gray in the law, and there's so many ways of interpreting it. And there's so much that can be done with it. And it's amazing that today, what I can't imagine—I get a little sense of what's happening at Virginia. But we know what's happening in the greater world. We're still fighting the same, the same battles that we were fighting at UVA Law here today in the broader world. And so, you know, I do hope that the foundation that people like Elaine Jones started, and that we picked up, that you all are able to continue to carry the ball and understand that it is a revolution. And it is not for the faint of heart, what you're doing. It's amazing. You would think that when you're talking about women's rights, when you're talking about the rights of poor people, when you're talking about the rights of people of color, that we all care about the least of us, because don't we understand if we don't care—take care of them, like, no one's going to do well, but that's not how it works. But we keep on going. And, I think, probably all of us, and I know certainly as I said, I've moved into my creative career, like that's what I'm doing with the work that I do. I'm trying to keep going. I'm trying to keep the drumbeat, trying to keep the conversation going. And I just—I'm grateful that VLW is still there, and that you all are still doing the work. Don't be afraid like I was, because I did get scared. And they did silence me. But then I'm doing it on my own. So, thank you all for this conversation.

**Deborah Lofton:** I think I am next on the list, although I was going to talk about the journal and I feel like we—if Arafat is able to speak now, it was really her brainchild and hearing her speak first I think would be wonderful to put my piece into context.

**Arafat Yinka Balogun:** Thanks, Debbie. Before we started, actually, I was talking to Addie and I was telling her that with my recent conversations with Susan, and also Shireen, I realized that a lot of what I do now, a lot of what my thinking is, the thinking process that I use came directly from my education or my experiences at UVA. I didn't link it to the work there then because I actually felt that we were just doing what we needed to. I thought it was natural. I didn't think it was disruptive. I didn't. And I think maybe it started because the way Bettina convinced us, my set, to join Virginia Law Women, it wasn't just going to be about selling t-shirts or “make love not law review.” We were actually going to try and be lawyers. We're going to try and use legal

reasoning to effect change. And that was what I thought I was going to get there. I was convinced to come to UVA, and not Harvard, and not Michigan or Vanderbilt, by two white professors at University of Miami, which is where I got my undergrad degree. And they told me that I would be a better lawyer than people that had gone to Yale or gone to Harvard. And I believed them.

So, I honestly didn't think we were radical. When looking back at the wealth of information and the interviews in the newspapers, the whole Doug Leslie issue, I realize now that he—it changed a lot of them as well because over the years in UVA, I also interacted a lot with the law faculty. Maybe they thought they were paying lip service to us, which is where the journal comes in, but I took them seriously. And what I used was the way they taught me to think and reason. So, if it ended up shaming them, all the better for me, so it became obvious that you guys are just delaying, you don't want to do this. So, you're putting roadblocks in our way. And we will keep going at it until you tire—you get tired, or we graduate and somebody else will pick up the baton and keep going. And hopefully won't relent.

For me, it was a good experience. Because we were, well, we were taught, because we're—talking to Addie as well, I went to boarding school, late by most standards, in the UK [United Kingdom] and there weren't many Blacks there either. And I remember we had a racial incident in my biology class, and we had to make our case to the [school] administration that the biology teacher had to be sacked. And she was sacked. And I think maybe that was where the seed was sown. So going over—coming over to America, undergrad, I wasn't active in student politics by any stretch of the imagination. Going to Virginia, starting with UVA, for me, it was just normal issues. And I, like I said, I wanted people to understand how we were thinking. But I also knew that I had to understand how they were thinking, and how to talk the talk, to be able to convince them, because you know, sometimes when you're a woman or a Black woman in the legal profession, you don't want to be seen as being emotional. So you have to couch it, and cover it in terms where your audience, which is usually male, will want to listen to what you're saying, and will be forced to respond to you and cloak the language. But once you can pass through what is actually being said, then it will make it easier for you to know what strategy to employ to get what you want to get. So, that is how I operate here. You know, you can imagine, an African country, even till now, people will tell you, Oh, don't you think a male should be doing what you're doing? And they'll ask you, Where's the male partner? And it's—so you have to respond to all those things without emotion. And hope that because you're—the purpose you're trying to achieve for that person, if they see that you can, they will look past gender and do what they need to do and listen to you, and hopefully pay you for your work.

So, the broader picture, UVA. I enjoyed my experience there. I've tried to convince quite a few people to go there, either to the University itself or the Law School, some have gone and some have said, No way, I'm not going, I'm either going to Spelman, I'm either going to Harvard, I'm either going to other univer—Howard, you know, so. It was an incubator, I guess. And a lot of—talking to Susan like I said earlier, a lot of what she's doing as well and a lot of her thinking in trying to convince people who don't want to listen to women, don't want to listen to—don't want to look at race issues, has been



formed and has been informed by what she has learned while she was at Virginia Law Women. That's mine in a nutshell. Thank you for inviting me.

**Deborah Lofton:** Thank you. I think listening to all of you gives you a feel for what—how I felt stepping into the shoes of being president of Virginia Law Women in 1991, to graduate in 1992. I was so amazed by the strength and courage of these women who were doing these incredible things. And I had this responsibility of trying to get that journal finally launched. We thought we were close each year that I was there. But there was always one more thing we had to get done. And one—you know, more money we had to raise, or another advisor we needed to add to the board, it seemed—we were just on the precipice. And then, and I was terrified that if we didn't use the momentum that had been built up over the couple of years, it would just peter out and never happen. And I certainly did not have the—I could never have written any of the articles that were published in the journal, I was there to get this thing through. And as Arafat just said, we used whatever we could to garner the support and meet the requirements to get it launched. And that included fundraising. And even though we have mixed feelings about “make love not law review,” we did what we needed to—I don't know if you can see it with the camera, but we sold a heck of a lot of t-shirts to try to raise money.

And we also picked up on the momentum of the fact that 1991 represented twenty years of women at UVA—the undergrad. The Law School had had a couple of, you know, women attendees prior to that, but really, it was 1991 that represented twenty years of women at UVA. And we're looking around saying like, Geez, twenty years, we have a couple of women professors. We were around—and Addie did some research—what, 35 percent of the student body. But, like, law firms were not hiring. I mean, we were—and most of us ended up at law firms, because that was kind of a turning point where law firms were hiring more women, I think, in the early 80s and late 70s, that probably wasn't even possible. So, we were at a crossroads in terms of being—having the opportunities as law students and law women.

And so, I landed as president in 1991. And we—one of the things—and Addie sent me some materials which brought back so many memories. I mean, this is before—[laughs]. It's funny to think but you know, it was before mobile phones, internet, even digital cameras. So unfortunately, we don't have a lot of the artifacts that people would have today. And looking back through some of the materials that Addie and Shireen put together really brought back just a flood of memories. And one of them being the board of advisors. So, that was a critical element to getting the Law School to approve the journal. We had to demonstrate that we had a very substantive board of advisors and across the spectrum. Other people have mentioned the fact that this originated as a women's journal, but that was seen as being too narrowly focused. And so, we used our political skills to broaden the scope of the journal and bring in an array of—a very impressive board of advisors. And one in particular that I remember is Marian Wright Edelman, who was just a phenomenal person and contributed so much in so many areas. But she was seen as a, like—she was universally respected and loved. She was not seen as ultra-political. I mean, who doesn't want to care for kids, right? And she was so articulate and so supportive, and that was a real—I think that the administration

really saw her support of us as being critical in getting them to finally approve the journal.

Fundraising, as I mentioned, was another big issue. We did garner support from the broader University community, including the undergraduate constituencies and BLSA and other student groups. And, you know, we were a coalition across the entirety of the Law School, men, women, other groups that were supportive. And we used that to our advantage to get this across the line, and then to actually do the work. I mean, this is not easy to create a journal. And I think like pulling the threads of some of the other things that were said, the law and econ philosophy was so embedded in everything that we did, every class, and the people who spoke in class were, it was like an echo chamber, right? And the professors liked to hear what their point—what their point of view was. So, it was just constant. And the people who spoke up in class, and then turned out to make *Law Review*, you know, all seemed to be part of this echo chamber. And so, if you didn't really buy into that philosophy, or were interested in other ways of thinking, you didn't have the opportunity to participate in a sophisticated legal journal, like the *Virginia Journal of Social Policy & the Law*. And so, in that last year, in addition to getting it approved, we had to build the foundation of how do you actually get this thing launched. And we, one of the last things that we did that year, before I graduated was put together the staff that would then take the journal and actually publish, and I asked Addie to send to me the first edition, and, the pride that I feel from—for all of the hard work that all of us did, to think that in 1993, they were able to publish the first edition, and it's so substantive, the articles are—you could read it today, and think, this is all so relevant.

So, I really give tremendous kudos to everyone on this call. And also, the people that came after that, took all the hard work, once getting it launched, then to actually see it published. And it's been published now for over thirty years. So, it's just a tremendous, tremendous accomplishment. And I can't thank Shireen enough for tracking me down [laughs], because this has been such a phenomenal experience. And I would say, all of us, we're still active in things today, and many times people look at you and say, Why are you bothering? We're still fighting the same fights. And then you look back on something like this, and you say to yourself, You know, I passed the baton to the next person, I didn't know whether it was going to be picked up or not. But now looking back, all that work really did make a difference. And that's really emboldened me in sharing this story with other people in my life to say, sign up for that club or mentor that student or that other person at work or something, because you just, you plant these seeds. And sometimes you don't know if they're going to take root, but in many, many cases they do. And then you get something phenomenal like this. So, it's been just a fantastic experience. And I would love to hear from Virginia Law Women today to understand what is top of their mind, and what challenges are they facing? And what could we do to support them? Because, we're at the—we've been at this for a while, and we know the fight isn't over yet. But would love to find a way to show our support and help wherever possible.

**Addie Patrick:** Thank you, Debbie. I'm going to pass it on to Abigail and Moksha, you can pick up those questions, or I think maybe lead us into our very brief Q&A with the time that we have left. Thank you guys.

**Abigail Williams:** Thank you. First, I just wanted to say I am so glad that both Moksha and I were able to join and listen to your all's stories. I think that we're really proud to follow in your guys's footsteps and the changes that you guys advocated for have definitely made both UVA and VLW a better place. In terms of—I'll just give you guys kind of a quick update of what VLW is doing today and move into more questions that we had for you all. I think that we're taking more of a diversity in clerkships approach for the past two years, that's been something we've been pretty heavily advocating for, have gotten some pushback from administration on some of the events that we've been doing. And so, in terms of advocacy, I think, going forward in this year, that is our big kind of centerpiece of what a lot of the board members are currently working on. So, excited to see how that kind of plays out. And as you guys were saying, to pass the baton, and hopefully that continues to change for the better. But something I was curious about was how—you talked kind of briefly about faculty members, some being more supportive than others. How did you guys see that play out either in the classroom or at events? Did you guys find a solid group of faculty that were able to be supportive, or was that harder to find?

**Deborah Lofton:** I mean, I'll say it was pretty limited. I mean, [Elizabeth S.] "Buffy" Scott (class of '77), she was one of our advisors on the journal. She was supportive. We—there were pockets. Pam[ela S.] Karlan had joined in like '91, I think like that, she was a—she's done phenomenal things. She was a very—it was early in her career. She was very supportive. But I mean, there were pockets, but it was—you had to really find it. And then as I think Montana was saying, like stuff the boxes with invites, and it wasn't automatic. It was harder, though, then, there—again, there wasn't email, you had to go to assigned office hours. It was a—I think I'm hoping that in today's environment, there's a lot more ways to interact with professors. It was pretty structured back then, as I remember.

**Montina Cole:** I'll say just really briefly, I don't think of there ever, and I think everything you said is right. I don't think of there ever being any real strong champion in terms of a faculty member for us, by the time we came along, the class of '91, anyway, Gary Peller was gone. It sounds like you all's class—Shireen and Arafat and others—had a champion in him. But in terms of my experience, I don't remember that at all. What I do remember is that there may have been a professor here or there who was supportive, but more like quietly, again, not a champion, somebody who you could go into their office, maybe they'd say, Close the door, and they'd talk to you, but not a public champion. It just wasn't the environment. And especially if you were a professor, perhaps, who didn't have tenure. So, that was my—what I instead remember, is having an experience of, again, the professor, the one who was surprised that we saw—that she saw so many of her students at the speech where I think it was Gary Peller and Kim Crenshaw who were here, saying things in class about, when the students had the braveness to raise his hand and say, You know, I don't understand Professor BeVier, when it seems like in these cases, in our casebook that the tenant always loses, or the tenant should lose, it just doesn't seem fair. And Professor BeVier said, you know, I'm paraphrasing here, but, Fairness? Fairness? Don't talk to me about fairness. Talk to me about what a rational economic actor should have done ex ante, as opposed to ex post.

So that's my memory of faculty, right? That's my memory. And I wish that we would have had a Gary Peller during our year.

**Ann Fort:** I just would follow on with in response to Montina's observation about tenure and other sort of, the professional positioning of some of the professors that we might have expected could be more supportive of us. Some of them were trailing spouses. Some of them were not tenured or even close. And they were dealing with the same atmosphere we were dealing with and trying to make decisions about how to manage their careers in that environment. So, I don't recall really, really expecting anybody to help us [laughs]. I felt like this was much more of a students-for-students endeavor.

**Shireen Lewis:** And I agree with Ann, and I think, Abigail, get students—get other students, get other students and other students' groups behind you for whatever it is you want. That's—do not depend on faculty. Get students. Get them involved, get them agitated, get them fired up, get them to really join you in whatever it is you're advocating for, and then you do the big push, it's not only just coming from you, it's coming from everybody else who is—all other students. And that's very important. That's how you're going to affect change in that kind of environment.

**Arafat Yinka Balogun:** Yes, I think it's, to write on what Shireen said, it's always important for whatever cause you have when you have more supporters across board. So, it looks like it's a greater problem, or it's a systematic problem, more than it being a very narrow, Oh, it's always only the women that are complaining, you know. If across board you have a lot of groups, and I understand there are more groups in the Univer—in the Law School now, that will always sell whatever it is you're trying to achieve.

**Shireen Lewis:** And very quickly, I'm sorry. You don't have to get everybody from the group. Just get some people, yes, because for the *Law Review* affirmative action thing, there were some people that aligned with Imani Ellis on BLSA, who were actually on *Law Review*. They were not the majority, but she had some allies from *Law Review*. And they had to, of course, to get an insight into the thinking, some of the things that were being said, behind closed doors, so she was able to better strategize. So, you don't need an entire organization of any of these groups. You just need some—a few key people, and that is going to help you.

**Abigail Williams:** Thank you. That is some really great perspective. I want to be mindful of time. So, I'm going to end with kind of a broader question. I'm wondering how you see your time in VLW influencing your life beyond UVA?

**Arafat Yinka Balogun:** I think unconsciously it does a lot. And the—one of the most critical things having this talk has made me realize is that it is all tied to that period of my life. And it was very organic. You—I didn't realize it until I was talking to Shireen, talking to Susan, that, oh, so that the spark actually is still alive. And you use it unconsciously. But it has delivered great results. Regardless of what sphere of law you decide, or not law, that you decide to go into.

**Tonya Lewis Lee:** Yes, I would say, I agree with Arafat. I mean, my time at VLW has really influenced everything that I do. I think, like I said, finding a space and a place and understanding that I had the power to be able to bring different voices, different thought to the school, that I was exposed to that way of thinking has empowered me throughout everything that I do. And like I said, I think I'm still kind of trying to do similar work through the work that I'm doing today. And, you know, despite all of the stuff that went on at UVA, at that time, I'm actually really grateful for it because it gave me the fire to continue doing the work. And so, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, and makes you more powerful. So, it was—I wouldn't trade it for anything. And I'm grateful that I had it.

**Tracy Preston:** And I would just pick up on that, too. I do think the things that we learned were more organic. I mean you—as I'm listening to stories and remembering things coming back, what between the coalitions and the allies in the how to work a system, it still works today, whether you're practicing law or not. I think it impacts our leadership, to be honest with you, right, because we wanted—we felt the view of being in the role when we started and then embracing broader perspectives even beyond our own, there were things that we may have learned that we didn't know about, but we now understand it. And so I think it makes me a better leader in a way of being not just empathetic, but also just leading diverse people, diverse thought and how do you have that coalition and that coalescence that you need to execute, whether it's a project or a film or, you know, an item that you're trying to produce for the masses, or run a wellness spa. I mean, those things are really, really important because it's the stuff like that and so I think you'll learn that a lot of the things may be kind of—maybe they call it political savviness or just understanding. You know, I'm a corporate secretary, I have to look and listen to a lot of people and you're kind of trying to discern. And Claudia you know this, too. And Deborah, you're sitting there and you're listening. There, the alliances will shift depending on who's—what the issue is. And so you've got to be able to read the room and I think, doing the things that we did at the time, in the context that we were in, I think it allowed us to maybe heighten you know, maybe also our Spidey senses heightened to understand those things, to make us, I think, better contributors to the law, or the fields that we're in, as a citizen. To recognize that, you know, taking care of others is important and feeling not isolated and alone is really important. And I think it helps us as more, I would say, maybe we're more well-rounded in leadership, and leading and being empathetic and bringing others along on a journey that could be bumpy sometimes, and trying to get through the other side, and looking for those allies, wherever they are across organizations or disciplines, so.

**Addie Patrick:** And I want to recognize that we're at time, so if folks need to jump off the call, I understand. But I—before I stop the recording, I want to give a moment for—if anyone else has something they want to add for the record to do so.

**Montina Cole:** I just briefly want to say this is really important what UVA Law Library is doing, to thank you for this project. I don't have to tell anybody, the times we live in, times of censorship, of misinformation, trying to stifle the truth. History is important if we're not to repeat the more, less-admirable parts of our history. So, I'm very happy that you all have this project and I thank you for what you're doing.

**Shireen Lewis:** Same here, and I want to thank all of the wonderful women who answered my call, thank you all so much. Thank you, thank you, [Thank you Shireen] thank you to the Library. Thank you to the Library so much, this is very important. And I know that we, the women on this call, who were in VLW at that time, we are going to continue, connecting, conversing, I'm going to plan something where we all can get together. And so, we are going to continue our story, our narrative and our connection, so thank you all so much. Thank you. Thank you. And thank you to the women who are now leading up VLW, yes, you know, continue the fight. Don't be scared. Let me tell you, just charge right on and you all can get my contact information from Addie if you need it. I'd be very happy to continue the dialogue.

*End of interview*