

REMARKS FROM THE VOLUME 1 BOARD OF EDITORS

*Maria Fernandez-Williams**

When I attended Cornell Law School, I was very involved in the fabric of the law school. I chose to focus on being the President of the Latino American Law Students Association (LALSA) as a 2L, an organization that provided me with the support I needed while attending Cornell. At the same time, the concepts of social justice and public policy were and continue to be important to me. Thus, when the individuals working on the launching of the *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy (CJLPP)* approached me, I jumped at the chance to be part of the founding members of the Journal. I recall the early meetings and the excitement of creating an alternative journal addressing the intersection of law and public policy—the power of the law to achieve social justice.

Those meetings where we discussed and debated the mission of the *CJLPP* were a breath of fresh air for me. I was pleased to be working with individuals who were planning different paths after graduation (public interest, government, law firms, etc.) and yet we all had the same passion for social justice and the drive to make the *CJLPP* successful.

As Administrative Editor for Volume 1 of the *CJLPP*, I worked closely with the other founding members and dealt with many of the issues in getting a new journal launched, many of which were new for us. I was very proud when our first issue was published, which still holds a special place on my bookshelf, and of being part of change at Cornell Law School. As time has passed, I am pleased to see that the *CJLPP* has continued our mission and has grown to a highly regarded student-edited law journal. It seems like yesterday we were in the midst of all the planning. Congratulations to the *CJLPP* on celebrating its 25th anniversary and here is to many more years of excellence and social impact through the law.

* Maria Fernandez-Williams was the Administrative Editor for Volume 1 of the *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy*. During her time at Cornell Law School, she was also the President of the Latin American Law Students Association (LALSA). After graduation, she was involved with many non-profit organizations, including LatinoJustice–PRLDEF, a Latino civil rights organization. Recently she was elected as a School Board Member for the Ossining Union Free School District in Ossining, New York.

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*Nicky Goren**

When I think back to my law school days, being a part of launching the new *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy* was not only a highlight but, in retrospect, a building block for my future. As I reflect on my experiences, I have three key takeaways.

First, working as part of a team is a key to success. Sure, there were leaders in the group (the fearless Karen Kemble in particular), but it actually took all of us to pull off getting this publication approved and off the ground in a way that it allowed us to now celebrate its success twenty five years later. Team building and team work have been core to my experiences as an attorney, as chief of staff to the CEO of a federal agency, and as a CEO myself. Throughout my experiences, I learned that the end product and outcome is generally better if developed and executed by a team than by one or two people working in a silo, and that we have a better chance of success by working together.

Second, just because others have tried and failed doesn't mean you can't succeed. We all heard over and over that many had tried to establish a third journal at Cornell and had not succeeded. This group of mission-driven idealistic students did not let that history stop them—and aren't we all glad that we would not be deterred? Throughout my career, while I have always been willing to learn from my own and other people's mistakes, the mere fact that something had been tried and failed has not been a deterrent—what I've learned is that we need to learn from those failures (in the words of Jean Case at the Case Foundation “fail forward”) and not be deterred from trying until we succeed.

Third, policy research and advocacy are the keys to social change. Our group opted to form a journal around the idea of law and public policy. So much of law school focused on reading, interpreting, and applying the law—and less on what it takes to ensure good policy and

* Nicky Goren was a Symposium Editor for Volume 1 of the *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy*. Since law school, Nicky spent five years on Capitol Hill, primarily with the Congressional Budget Office. She then spent over twelve years at the Corporation for National and Community Service, serving as Associate General Counsel, then Chief of Staff, and ultimately the acting CEO during the first year of the Obama Administration. In 2010, Nicky left the government and became President of Washington Area Women's Foundation, and in 2014 assumed her current position as President & CEO of the Meyer Foundation in Washington, D.C.

therefrom good law. From our symposium on the Americans with Disabilities Act, this intersection between law, legislation, and social justice began to crystallize for me. The need for a focus on policy continued to evolve and become more clearly defined as I assumed each of my roles across my career. In my first position out of law school at the Congressional Budget Office, I came to understand quickly how politics and policy—and budget policy in particular—undergirded everything.¹ In my various roles at the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that continues to be a political football depending on who is in office, I witnessed how the policy agenda of a particular administration could alter, threaten, or enhance the work of nonprofits meeting needs across the country. And in my more recent roles in the non-profit sector and philanthropy, it has become increasingly clear that we collectively have to go beyond applying band-aids to address societal problems and also be willing to tackle the root causes of issues such as lack of housing stability, low graduation and high unemployment rates, and the barriers to building wealth and assets in so many of our communities. At the core of all of these issues is the fact of inequity, which fundamentally can only be addressed by peeling back the layers that have been put in place over many generations through policy and legislation.

And so, though I did not know it at the time, my experience with this band of visionaries at the *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy* in many ways paved the way to where I find myself now—seeking to understand, dismantle, and rebuild policies and institutions that will result in a more equitable community and country for all.

¹ I was there during, for example, the battle for the Clinton health care plan.

