

2024 Annual Summary

The Birnbaum Women's Leadership Center is a unique force multiplier in the fight for gender equity. We are the only one of NYU Law's 38 institutes and centers focused solely on ensuring the success and centrality of women in the law. 2024 was a year of expanded visibility and validation for the BWLC and our work to train and inspire the leaders of tomorrow ... to spark timely conversations that elevate issues of gender and democracy ... and to leverage research, scholarship, and the media to help advance new ideas and solutions.

Leadership Development

For Students. The BWLC's Fellows, 12 JD students from each class selected during their 1L year, are the heart of our programming. In November, we welcomed the Class of 2027 cohort – our seventh since the launch of the Center – who will soon embark upon the Sara Moss Women's Leadership Training Program, our annual intensive that takes place each January and features deep engagement with expert facilitators, alumni/ae mentors, and an executive coach.

Programming highlights from this year include:

- Year-round coaching, group and individual sessions designed to complement and reinforce key themes (recent topics included *Giving and Receiving Feedback* and *Relationship Management*).
- A new mentorship database to ensure seamless pairing of Fellows with accomplished NYU Law alumni/ae, relationships that last through (and often beyond) graduation.
- Social and networking events, celebrations of milestones, and tools to connect across cohorts.
- New opportunities for BWLC alumni/ae Fellows will soon be underway, focused on skills, support, and camaraderie as their careers progress.

Among the BWLC's NYU Law-wide programming, *Suddenly Silent: Strategies to Speak Up and Stand Out*, an annual interactive, improv-based workshop designed to help newly-minted law students (women, especially) counter the inclination to retreat in the classroom, drew its largest-ever audience in October; *Lead With Your Strengths*, a session we present at the January intensive, has been offered in broad format at 1L Orientation since 2021, including this past August.

For Law Firms. We have long aimed to adapt and offer signature BWLC programs to a wider audience. With the vision and leadership of our extraordinary Advisory Board, formed in early 2024, we have begun planning with two leading law firms. Gibson Dunn programming will commence in early 2025, announced at an October reception celebrating the firm's decade of commitment to advancing women; we are working with Paul, Weiss to determine scope and timing, as well.

Hub for Thought Leadership

Public Events. The BWLC's public events are a major draw for NYU Law and the broader legal community. In 2024, we held and co-sponsored 25 high-profile gatherings featuring the nation's leading thinkers, writers, and doers, reaching 10,000 guests and virtual viewers. Among these:

We had the honor of presenting **A Conversation with The Honorable Elena Kagan, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States** at NYU Law on September 9. The Justice met with law students throughout the day and participated in a 'fireside chat' luncheon with Professor Melissa Murray – a lively conversation that touched on everything from women at the Court to ethics reform. The event was covered by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, CNN.com, and Politico, among others. This was the first installment of a new named lecture series at the Law School – the Sidney Shainwald Public Interest Lecture – that the BWLC will host annually.



Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States
Elena Kagan with BWLC Fellows



Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States
Elena Kagan with BWLC Advisory Board

Our annual Dechert Symposium, **Reconstructing the Reconstruction Amendments**, took place in February. The standing room-only event doubled as a celebration of the scholarship of NYU Law's John S. R. Shad Professor of Lawyering and Ethics, Peggy Cooper Davis, and her path-breaking work on *Neglected Stories: The Constitution and Family Values*.



Professors Peggy Cooper Davis, Kimberly Mutcherson, Aderson Francois, and Serena Mayeri



Professor Melissa Murray in conversation with Leadership Conference President Maya Wiley

In May, the BWLC brought together the Law School community – 150 friends, supporters, students, Trustees, and others – to enjoy the Tony Award-winning **SUFFS on Broadway**, followed by a talkback led by Dean Troy McKenzie and BWLC Executive Director Jennifer Weiss-Wolf.

The Center co-hosted a phenomenal Fall series on reproductive rights and justice:

- A September panel conversation, **Personhood and Pregnancy**, in partnership with Pregnancy Justice and NYU Law's Reproductive Justice Clinic, featured Irin Carmon of *New York Magazine*, Jenice Fountain of the Yellowhammer Fund, Rutgers Law Professor and former BWLC Fellow-in-Residence Kimberly Mutcherson, Karen Thompson of Pregnancy Justice, and UC Davis Law's Mary Ziegler.
- Crooked Media's Alyssa Mastromonaco interviewed Jessica Valenti for the October launch of her *New York Times* best-seller, **Abortion: Our Bodies, Their Lies, and the Truths We Use to Win**.
- A pre-election nationwide screening of the Academy Award-nominated film, **RED, WHITE AND BLUE**, in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School. Professor Melissa Murray and the student co-chairs of the NYU Law chapter of If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice joined in a satellite conversation with LaTosha Brown of Black Voters Matter and Penn Carey Law's Kate Shaw, among others.

Other 2024 highlights include:

- **Backsliding Democracies and Women's Rights in the U.S.** (January), in partnership with the 92NY's Recanati-Kaplan Talks and Ms. Magazine.
- **Panel on Careers in Reproductive Rights** (February), student-led program by NYU Law's Chapter of If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice.
- **Backsliding Democracies and Women's Rights Around the World** (February), in partnership with the 92NY's Recanati-Kaplan Talks and Ms. Magazine.
- **Parenthood & the Job Search** (April), co-sponsored by the Office of Career Services and Law Women (featuring a BWLC alumna Fellow as moderator).
- **BWLC and Reproductive Justice Clinic at NYU Law Celebratory Reception** (April), co-sponsored by the Law Alumni Association.
- **The Originalism Trap: Extremism and the Constitution** (June), in partnership with the 92NY's Recanati-Kaplan Talks.

Visiting Scholars. Last year, the BWLC initiated a Visiting Fellows-in-Residence program to engage leading scholars and practitioners. The synergy has been invaluable. For Spring 2024, we were joined by Rose Cuison-Villazor, Professor of Law, Chancellor's Social Justice Scholar, and former Co-Dean at Rutgers Law School in Newark, and Kimberly Mutcherson, Professor of Law and former Co-Dean at Rutgers Law School in Camden. In Fall 2024, we welcomed Dr. Sharon Malone, a medical expert, *New York Times* best-selling author, and a leading voice for women's and reproductive health; she will be joined next semester by Jennifer Hendricks, Professor of Law at the University of Colorado Law School. (Both Dr. Malone and Professor Hendricks will work with us to organize the 2025 Dechert Symposium, **Collateral Damage of Dobbs on Women's Health Beyond Abortion Care**, scheduled for March 14.)

Strategic Public Leadership

BWLC leaders are prominent public voices and contribute regularly to research, advocacy, and media – with the goal of ensuring professional and societal commitments to gender equity and democratic ideals.

Last January, the BWLC partnered with Yale Law School’s Democracy Initiative to host **Democracy and Reproductive Rights and Justice**, bringing together 75 state, local, and national experts, scholars and academics, leaders in philanthropy, pollsters, and media and narrative storytellers. Among the speakers, former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and *New York Times* columnist Jamelle Bouie subsequently elevated ideas that were discussed. We have made this into an annual event; the next installment will be held February 7, 2025.

In early September, the BWLC released its first-ever public report, **Make The Connection: Gender and Democracy**, funded by the Ford Foundation and geared toward philanthropic leaders to encourage them to support programming and initiatives at the intersection of democracy and gender. On October 16, the BWLC presented the report, at a full-day launch event hosted by the Ford Foundation and attended by more than 50 leading foundation executives.

On September 26-27, together with the NYU Law Reproductive Justice Clinic and the national nonprofit Pregnancy Justice, we organized a two-day closed-door convening, **Personhood and Pregnancy**, to grapple with the growing interest in fetal personhood. The sessions culminated with a public panel attended by over 150 funders, advocates, and law students.



Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and NYT columnist Jamelle Bouie with BWLC and YLS Democracy Initiative leadership



Panelists Mary Ziegler, Karen Thompson, Kimberly Mutcherson, Irin Carmon, and Jenice Fountain at Personhood and Pregnancy

More broadly, we engaged throughout the year with key decision makers – ranging from the White House Gender Policy Council and Members of Congress, to state and municipal legislators and executives – while collaborating with national, state, and local gender equity organizations. And we boldly raised our voices: Professor Murray’s prolific scholarship and media presence continued to educate audiences nationwide; we couldn’t have been more proud that the book she co-authored became a *New York Times* #1 bestseller; the BWLC supported the launch by joining the New York Historical Society, Brennan Center for Justice, and others to host book events. Jennifer Weiss-Wolf continued to publish op-eds – there was no shortage of timely topics in 2024 – totaling more than one a month in outlets ranging from *TIME* Magazine to *Oprah* and *Ms.* Magazines to the *Los Angeles Times*.

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Make the Connection: Gender and Democracy – Ford Foundation

Sidney Shainwald Public Interest Lecture Series – Sybil Shainwald

Democracy and Reproductive Rights and Justice – The Overbrook Foundation

SUFFS x NYU Law: A Celebration of Women's Leadership – Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

Personhood and Pregnancy – Endeavor Foundation, Ford Foundation, Groundswell Fund, Ms. Foundation for Women, The Overbrook Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and Wellspring Advisors