



THE PROMISE INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT
2021 - 2022

OUR FOUNDING STORY

AWARENESS THROUGH THE ARTS

The Promise Institute owes its founding to Dr. Eric Esrailian, producer of the film, *The Promise*. As the first feature film to tell the story of the Armenian Genocide, *The Promise* is a powerful example of the way art can connect history to action. The Armenian genocide began in 1915, and in time more than 1.5 million people would perish in an atrocity driven by ethnic and religious intolerance.

Following the film's premiere, Dr. Esrailian and fellow producer Anthony Mandekic used the film's proceeds to launch our Institute. "The Promise Institute is so named because UCLA and the UCLA School of Law are making the promise to refugees and people suffering from injustice that we will create the tools and train the people to address these crises."



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UCLA School of Law acknowledges the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (Los Angeles basin, So. Channel Islands). As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahihirom (Elders), and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present, and emerging.

MEET THE TEAM



STEPHEN GARDBAUM
Faculty Director



KATE MACKINTOSH
Executive Director



CATHERINE SWEETSER
Deputy Director



JESS PEAKE
Assistant Director



JOSEPH BERRA
Human Rights in the Americas
Project Director



PRIYA MORLEY
Racial Justice Policy Counsel



RIE OHTA
Human Rights Litigation
Clinic Fellow



SHERRY YUAN
Program Manager



NATALIE MONSANTO
Communications and
Development Manager



KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW
Promise Institute Chair
in Human Rights



KAL RAUSTIALA
Promise Institute Chair
in Comparative and International Law

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

A series of challenging global events over the past year underscored the profound need for human rights protections around the world. We believe that our students should begin their careers equipped not only with excellent legal training, but also with advocacy skills, exposed to a wide array of global issues, and prepared for the complexities of human rights work in practice. Our programming and events this year did just that.

This year, we launched an important and landmark initiative: Race & Human Rights Reimagined. Led by our Racial Justice Policy Counsel S. Priya Morley, alongside Professors Asli Ü. Bâli and E. Tendayi Achiume, the initiative seeks to expose a wider audience to global racial justice issues and critical approaches to human rights. The events and resource materials we produced were a resounding success and we look forward to building on these in the future.

We continue to pursue human rights priorities through litigation. Under Deputy Director Catherine Sweetser, our domestic litigation included a challenge to the use of solitary confinement in California on the basis that it constitutes torture, as well as well as Appeals Court arguments about the use of U.S.-designed tools in human rights abuses overseas. Our international litigation included work by our Human Rights in the Americas Project Director Joseph Berra to support Honduran activists who are fighting for protection of Indigenous peoples, the environment, and judicial norms in the nation's notoriously corrupt legal system.

Assistant Director Jess Peake has continued developing UCLA Law as one of the foremost training grounds for open-source digital investigations in the nation, through a partnership with remarkable colleagues at UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz. Using these techniques, we produced a report investigating the use of social media platforms to spread disinformation during the Fall 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh Conflict, the implications of which resonate widely in an increasingly digital world.

Mere days before the launch of kinetic warfare in Ukraine, we hosted global experts on the use of cyberwarfare tactics and how these could be prosecuted as international crimes. This precipitated a number of national press appearances where I was honored to help educate audiences on international criminal law in the context of the war in Ukraine. Additionally, I've continued speaking and writing in support of the inclusion of a new international crime of ecocide into the Rome Statute, the urgency of which has been underscored this year by a series of climate-related disasters.

Not surprisingly, our students and alums continue to inspire us. These human rights advocates have been expanding and defending human rights in their work, and we are pleased to share that our 2022 graduating class is moving on to prestigious, valuable positions in a wide array of globally respected organizations.

Thank you for standing with us in this imperative work,



KATE MACKINTOSH
Executive Director

OUR APPROACH

- *FOCUS AREAS.* -

THE ENVIRONMENT
TECHNOLOGY
MIGRATION
RACE & INDIGENEITY
ACCOUNTABILITY

- *STRATEGIC GOALS* -

EMPOWERING

the next generation of
human rights lawyers
and leaders

GENERATING

new thinking on
human rights

ENGAGING

our students and our
research to drive
positive real world
impact

- *STRATEGIC GOAL* -

EMPOWERING A NEW GENERATION
OF HUMAN RIGHTS
LAWYERS & LEADERS



INNOVATIVE EDUCATION

Training our students is one of the most powerful things we do as an institute. Promise supplements the robust UCLA Law curriculum with an array of innovative and experiential opportunities.

Deputy Director Catherine Sweeter continued her impactful **Human Rights Litigation Clinic**, mapping the ways human rights issues can be pursued through domestic courts. Students are hands-on with the Clinic's cases, preparing them for seamless transitions to legal practice after graduation. From fighting corporate support of torture and slavery in the Global South, to opposing technological surveillance used for religious persecution, to litigating for the rights of unhoused and detained persons in California, the Clinic's cases work to expand understanding and protection of human rights through every level of domestic courts.

Joseph Berra's **Human Rights in the Americas Clinic** brought students to Honduras for continued support of human rights defenders there. Cases seek accountability for a range of issues including assassination of Indigenous environmental protectors, arbitrary detention of activists, and the Tolupeán genocide. A major through-line is the effort to defend Indigenous communities against attempts to privatize their resources for profit.

This year we welcomed back former Head of Global Strategy for Amnesty International Danny Vannucchi. His course, **Successful Strategies for Human Rights Advocacy**, drew on case studies and lessons learned to introduce students to best practices in moving people to act in defense of human rights. Students left the course with an understanding of the complex web of stakeholders, from donors to press and communications, civil society actors, social media, business/industry and governmental actors, and how to leverage this to assess a human rights situation and design successful campaigns.

On the heels of concluding his remarkable twenty-year run heading Human Rights Watch's International Justice program, Richard Dicker taught **Prospects for International Justice**. The course addresses the key lessons arising from international efforts to render justice for humankind's most shocking crimes, and helps students think critically about how to engage with the International Criminal Court.

Moot courts offer the chance for students to develop crucial lawyering skills while networking with future peers. The famously immersive **Jean-Pictet Competition** saw this year's students flying to Mexico to compete with teams from around the globe. Meanwhile our **Clara Barton IHL Competition** students were in Washington D.C., a particularly valuable experience for young jurists with an eye towards interacting with government bodies like the State Department during their careers. The Clara Barton students placed as finalists, and their award is displayed in our office!

Open-Source Intelligence is the future of effective human rights accountability, and a powerful tool for a host of human rights areas, including corporate accountability and supply chain investigations. Assistant Director Jess Peake's **Digital Open-Source Investigations Training** has prepared students on everything they need to be leading digital investigators, from the ethics and techniques of the practice, to evidence-handling, court use and strategies for recognizing and addressing exposure to vicarious trauma.

Every January we engage students in a two-week intensive course: The **Human Rights Challenge**. Catherine Sweetser and Kate Mackintosh teach students to apply human-centered design, systems-thinking, network building and other techniques from outside traditional legal pedagogy to reimagine what the law can do — generating innovative legal solutions to the real-world human rights challenge selected for each year's class. This year's class challenged students to rethink the possibilities of human rights law in addressing global wildfires, with resulting projects building on children's and migrants' rights, the duty to protect against torture, and the emerging rights of nature.

This year we offered a unique course to students: **The Right to Food and Global Food Justice**. Taught by former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Hilal Elver, the course emphasized the relationship between human rights, social justice and food security, and examined the newly reformed global food governance framework.

SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMMING

The pace of global developments demands real-time supplemental educational opportunities for students. We curated these series to augment students' education with expert insights, preparing them with an understanding that goes beyond the headlines.

The porous boundary between the digital and the everyday has meant human rights conversations must necessarily take technology into account. Our **Global Digital Rights Challenges** series examined the ways technology is impacting human rights around the world, including through issues of internet shutdowns, what it means when American corporations moderate global content, and more.

Our **Human Rights Around the World** series brought issues of ongoing human rights crises into sharp focus. We sat down with experts - oftentimes from the impacted areas - who explained the context and ramifications of events in Ukraine, Myanmar, Tigray, Xinjiang and Yemen.

We offered a deep-dive on **Emerging Issues in International Criminal Law**, including a panel on cyberwarfare and one on ecocide. The speaker lineup included soon-to-be U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice, Beth Van Schaack, Charles Jalloh, Richard Dicker, Ambassador Christian Wenaweser, and Lindsay Freeman and our own Kate Mackintosh.

- STRATEGIC GOAL -

GENERATING NEW THINKING
ON HUMAN RIGHTS
AND DRIVING POSITIVE IMPACT



IMPACTING HUMAN RIGHTS

We generate new thinking on human rights through research and critical engagement with diverse frameworks, disciplines and actors, and drive positive impact on human rights through effective exchange, advocacy and litigation. Our work centers on the intersection of human rights and the below five thematic areas:



Technology



Environment



Accountability



Migration



Race / Indigeneity

This year's symposium, **Borders, The Pandemic & Human Rights** focused on COVID and migration. The day's panels explored sexual orientation, disability status and race and ethnicity in the context of borders, the pandemic, and human rights, featuring keynotes from IACHR Special Rapporteur Soledad Garcia-Munoz and UN Special Rapporteur E. Tendayi Achiume.



Jess Peake led students in using cutting-edge investigation techniques to look at the human rights implications of hate speech and disinformation in **"Social Media, Content Moderation and International Human Rights Law: The Example of the Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh Conflict."** The report tracks four different social media platforms to see what content the platforms left up, what they should have taken down, and whether they managed to balance the rights to freedom of expression with the prohibition of hate speech under international human rights law.



This Spring saw the realization of a much-anticipated project: our **Race & Human Rights Reimagined Initiative**. A resource for academics, students, scholars and activists, the Initiative offers a catalog of materials designed for people working on racial justice issues at any level who seek to adopt an international human rights frame.

The Initiative is the fruition of efforts by core Promise faculty Aslı Ü. Bâli and E. Tendayi Achiume with the Institute's newest hire: Racial Justice Policy Counsel S. Priya Morley. Together, they spearheaded events and materials on an interdisciplinary and critical approach to engaging with international law and human rights, particularly by combining Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAAIL) to dismantle structural racism and the continuing impacts of colonialism around the world.

The Initiative's toolkits, essential readings and more are publicly available on our website.



The campaign for the **new crime of ecocide** to be adopted into the Rome Statute continued to gain steam this year, after its announcement last summer. The law, which Executive Director Kate Mackintosh helped draft, has generated significant public interest. In addition to the ongoing media coverage and many media interviews, Kate Mackintosh wrote and spoke in numerous fora, including university guest lectures, conference presentations, diplomatic briefings, podcasts and webinars. We partnered on a new website with the Stop Ecocide Now Foundation and the University of London (ecocidelaw.com) and were part of the official SXSW lineup with our event "Ecocide Law: How 200 Words Might Save the Planet."



As part of our ongoing work highlighting **how race and Indigeneity impact human rights**, Joseph Berra worked with students Mara González Souto and Grace Carson to write the article "Tremors Along the Fault Line: A Critical Perspective on Covid-19 and the Right to Health in the United States."

He also collaborated with Odilia Romero of CIELO and Shannon Speed of UCLA's AISC to produce the forthcoming chapter in *Human Rights: Theory and Practice, 4th Ed.* from Oxford University Press: "Indigenous Rights and Language Sovereignty."



We are continuing our partnership with UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz in the **UC Network for Human Rights and Digital Fact-finding**. Under the leadership of Jess Peake, students in Cathy Sweetser's Human Rights Litigation Clinic were trained in Open-Source investigations techniques (OSINT) to support litigation about corporate human rights abuses in supply chains. Students studied issues such as admissibility in court, chronolocation and geolocation, which they were able to immediately use in active litigation.



We organized a **series of expert convenings**, to foster collaboration and generate new thinking in our areas of focus.

Just before Beth Van Schaack was nominated to her current role as U.S. Ambassador at Large for Global Criminal Justice, we hosted an expert consultation for her to consider the focus of her new mandate.

We hosted Professor Goran Sluiter for a discussion of his project, Secondary Liability for International Crimes, with a focus on corporate aiding and abetting. We partnered with the Williams Institute, bringing experts on LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers together to articulate a new research agenda, and we also hosted an array of scholars, practitioners and activists for a workshop on Palestine and international law.



Led by Joseph Berra and Catherine Sweetser, our **human rights litigation efforts** saw continued depth and breadth this year, spanning domestic as well as international courts. From efforts working through the Honduran judiciary to secure justice for slain Indigenous land defenders and grassroots activists, to domestic proceedings in the U.S. addressing slavery in corporate supply chains, as well as cases before the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, these cases concretely defend human rights both at home and abroad.



This February we brought together some of the foremost experts on international criminal law and technology for a public discussion on **cyberwarfare**. Featuring Ambassador Christian Wenaweser, Charles Jalloh, Lindsay Freeman, Richard Dicker and Kate Mackintosh, the panel met mere days before Russian launched its war in Ukraine. Discussing how the Rome Statute could be applied to cyber operations, as well as citing examples of Russian cyberattacks on Ukrainian infrastructure in recent years, the event led to a number of media appearances where Kate Mackintosh was tapped to explain war crimes in the context of Ukraine to audiences at major news outlets like ABC News and Bloomberg.



Our collaboration with civil society partners on **research and advocacy on Black and Indigenous migration** continued this year under Joseph Berra and S. Priya Morley. We supported the creation of CIELO's Indigenous Language Communities Map which tracked previously uncaptured language data across Los Angeles County. We also partnered with Indigenous Education Now! to secure LAUSD budget commitments of \$10M for Indigenous student support. Many of our grassroots partners joined us in two submissions to the UN and IACHR Special Rapporteurs on Migration, while S. Priya Morley wrote articles on the topic for Open Global Rights and the UCLA Law Review.



- *STRATEGIC GOAL* -

PLACING GRADUATES IN
IMPACTFUL CAREERS



ACCELERATING CAREERS

One of the most impactful things we can do is place our students in meaningful careers where they can be vectors of change in society. This year, three students received prestigious Promise Institute graduation awards to support them as they enter their careers in human rights. We are also directly supporting two of our 2022 graduates with year-long post-graduate fellowship funding to enable them to work with leading human rights organizations, including at the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights.



MARA GONZALEZ SOTO

Federal Public Defender, Federal Defenders of San Diego
The Promise Institute for Human Rights Award



JANINA HELLER

The Human Rights in the Americas Award:
Promise Institute for Human Rights Fellow at the
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights



MADHAVI NARAYANAN

Lawyers for Human Rights in South Africa
The Promise Institute for Human Rights Award



ANDREW REISENAUER

Post-Graduate Fellowship: United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees



RACHEL RYU

Post-Graduate Fellowship: Reprieve

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

VALUABLE HUMAN RIGHTS LEGAL TRAINING

"Without a doubt, the Promise Institute is the reason I was able to complete law school. In an environment focused on racing towards rules and 'objective' frameworks, the Promise Institute's faculty and staff center the human experience before the law. The Promise Institute pushed me not only to identify the ways in which the law has maintained hierarchies of global power, but also be creative in finding how it can be used as a tool for solidarity and collective liberation. I am truly grateful for the past three years with this incredible community, and look forward to the years to come as an alum."

MADHAVI NARAYANAN

"The Promise Institute really played a vital role in helping me to launch my career in international human rights law. I believe that the opportunities that Promise offered to make connections with those working in the field, along with providing courses and activities reflecting the variety of approaches to advancing human rights, gave me a unique and valuable introduction to human rights law.

"Furthermore, the Promise faculty's enthusiasm and personal attention ensured that I was able to make the most of the events, opportunities, and connections that they offered. Perhaps most importantly, they also built an incredible community allowing similarly inclined law students to connect and build relationships that I know will be invaluable resources as we all move forward in practicing human rights law."

ANDREW REISENAUER

"I am so grateful for the unparalleled opportunities that UCLA offered me and the support that I received from the Promise Institute for Human Rights. I learned very much and was welcomed with open arms by the student body and the staff. I could not have asked for a more fulfilling LLM experience - ranging from so many human rights course offerings, two human rights clinics, moot court competitions, journal, and the opportunity to support incredible professors through research assistantships.

"Such opportunities enabled me to deepen my knowledge and experience in the human rights field. After graduation, I look forward to fulfilling a long-held dream of mine to work for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as the next Promise Institute for Human Rights Fellow at REDESCA/CIDH."

JANINA HELLER

LOOKING AHEAD

2022 - 2023

Thank you for understanding the value of supporting work like ours, where longterm investments in human rights quietly pay dividends in the form of freedoms and dignity around the world over many decades.

As our next year begins, we are gearing up for more global impact, including hosting the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights at UCLA campus in March 2023. We are excited to continue honing talent and generating work which resonates with the challenges of our times. Above all, we are proud to be the innovative home for human rights at UCLA.

Join us as webring human rights to the fore, everywhere.



FOLLOW US



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