

# Law School Life



## Students meet U.S. Attorney General

Second-year law students Erin McGonigle (left) and Chelsea Rierson met with U.S. Attorney General William Barr during an open house reception at the U.S. Department of Justice. McGonigle and Rierson both interned in the department's Civil Rights Division as part of the law school's Washington, D.C. Semester in Practice program.

## Law school honors first female African American graduate

This spring, the law school community unveiled the portrait of Sharon "Nyota" Tucker, a 1974 graduate of the law school. Tucker, who previously served as an assistant professor of political science at Albany State University, is the first female African American graduate of the UGA School of Law. A former Fulbright-Hays Summer Abroad Fellow, a former Georgia Legal Services Program staff attorney and a board member of Liberty House and Communities in School, Tucker has served as a leader in both academia and in her community. She is pictured with her portrait and her son, daughter and granddaughter at the unveiling.



## Scholars spend time with Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham

The law school's Benham Scholars met with Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham (J.D.'70) during the school year. The Benham Scholars Program benefits individuals who hail from or show a demonstrated intent to practice in legally underserved communities. Posing with Benham (center) are (l. to r.) first-year students Sharod McClendon, Hillary Davis, Janay Alexander and Justin Edge.



## Dean Rusk International Law Center

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA SCHOOL OF LAW

In front of the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands, home to the International Court of Justice, are the 2018 Global Governance Summer School students: (l. to r.) Saif Ahmed, Mills Culver, Bryant Oliver, Maddie Neel, Frances Plunkett, Brooke Carrington, Hanna Karimipour and Caroline Harvey.

The University of Georgia School of Law this year again was ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* in the top 20 U.S. law schools for international law. The placement recognizes a tradition of excellence in international law education, scholarship and collaboration – a tradition spearheaded by the law school’s 42-year-old center of excellence, the Dean Rusk International Law Center.

The center launched several **new initiatives** this year, including:

- **A partnership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization** to offer a full-time, semester-long externship for students in the legal department of the NATO Allied Command Transformation. During the spring 2019 semester, third-year student Lauren Brown worked on international security issues in residence at NATO’s facility in Mons, Belgium.
- **A Consular Series** that brings to campus members of Atlanta’s diplomatic corps to speak with students on issues including international trade, migration and development. This year, the Consuls General of Belgium, Mexico and the United Kingdom engaged students with timely discussions about the future of the European Union, Brexit and the North American Free Trade Agreement.
- **A grant-funded research project**, in partnership with UGA’s School of Public and International Affairs Center for International Trade and Security, related to the United Nations sanctions regime against North Korea. School of Law faculty engaged in the research include Diane Marie Amann, Christopher M. Bruner, Harlan G. Cohen, Kathleen A. Doty and Melissa J. Durkee. They are supported in their work by several student researchers.

These initiatives join the complement of **global practice preparation** opportunities for **J.D. and LL.M. candidates**: the **Global Governance Summer School**, presented in partnership with the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies at the University of Leuven, Belgium, which offers students the opportunity for classroom sessions and professional development experiences in Leuven and Brussels as well as The Hague, Netherlands; **Global Externship Overseas**, which helps students earn practice experience at law firms, in-house legal departments, and intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations around the world; **international law advocacy** in contests like the Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot and the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition; **Louis B. Sohn Professional Development Fellowships**, which support student travel to Washington, D.C., to participate in the American Society of International Law Annual Meeting; and a host of events during the academic year. Center events in addition to the Consular Series included sponsorship of a panel on laws related to children and armed conflict at the annual International Law Weekend, hosted by the American Branch of the International Law Association in New York, as well as an experts’ conference in Athens, cosponsored with the student-run *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law*, titled “The International Criminal Court: A Community of Nations.”

—Dean Rusk International Law Center Director Kathleen A. Doty



**WILBANKS CEASE CLINIC**

# Lecture features key leader in sex abuse prosecution

The Wilbanks Child Endangerment and Sexual Exploitation Clinic hosted Daniel J. Dye, the senior deputy attorney general in criminal prosecutions for the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General, to speak on his experience as part of a landmark investigation.

In his lecture “Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church: The Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report,” Dye described the years-long investigation and consequent presentation of evidence to a grand jury that resulted in numerous arrests and convictions of priests and their supervisors.

After receiving a call from a district attorney regarding allegations of abuse by priests, Dye led a review that eventually spread to all but one Catholic diocese in Pennsylvania. Over the course of the investigation, authorities obtained more than half a million reports that included documentation of incidents for more than 1,000 victims.

Noting that the state’s case “could not have been done” without the grand jury, Dye said that after the Office of Attorney General revealed the results of its probe, other states – but not Georgia – also launched their own investigations.

In closing, Dye shared the summary statement he shares with all of the juries he argues before and encouraged lecture attendees to take



it with them: “You now know what happened here. You now know what was done. The only question left to decide is what are you going to do about it?”

The Wilbanks CEASE Clinic is the first of its kind in the nation dedicated solely to the assistance of survivors of child sexual abuse. Funded by a donation from School of Law alumnus Marlan B. Wilbanks (J.D.’86), the clinic seeks to educate and prepare the next generation of lawyers to represent survivors of child sexual abuse as well as to serve as a center of excellence for survivors and attorneys who are seeking these types of claims.

Before Dye spoke, Wilbanks welcomed the crowd and said he believes Georgia needs to update its laws protecting children from such atrocities.

“I feel like Georgia’s values, and the values of our citizens, strongly support what we’re trying to do, which is to try and support victims of child sexual abuse. But that being true, it’s not translating into action in politics,” he said, urging attendees to fight for and advocate for survivors.

## Sibley Lecturer asks if SCOTUS decisions are the law of the land

In his research, David A. Strauss – the law school’s 117th Sibley Lecturer – ponders a seemingly simple question: Are Supreme Court decisions the law of the land?

At first glance, the answer seems obvious. Of course, the Supreme Court is the final verdict on legal questions. Why even ask? But then one might remember the U.S. Constitution actually is the legal framework of the country. The Supreme Court’s job is to make sure that law is properly followed. Or is it a combination of both? Everyone knows the Constitution is what the Supreme Court says it is.

The question, Strauss argues, is much more complex than it appears.

Strauss – the University of Chicago Law School’s Ratner Distinguished Service Professor – has argued 19 cases before the Supreme Court. He said he believes



these questions are framed incorrectly, focusing on what a given law is supposed to mean rather than what that law requires citizens and elected officials alike to do.

The waters become muddied, though, when executives, like the president, disagree with the Supreme Court’s rulings. One such example Strauss provided was President Abraham Lincoln’s response to *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, which

## EDITH HOUSE LECTURER

# Get comfortable being uncomfortable

The 37th Edith House Lecture was presented by Audrey Boone Tillman (J.D.'89), who currently serves as executive vice president and general counsel of Aflac and focused on her experiences of rising through the ranks as a woman of color.

"Every single experience that's happened to me is a part of my success where I stand today," Tillman said, noting that the overarching theme of her talk was "get comfortable with being uncomfortable."

Tillman grew up in the Cascade Heights neighborhood in southwest Atlanta, which she described as an "exclusively African American experience." When it came time to attend college, her father encouraged her to find a school that was outside of her comfort zone, and she chose the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Once there, she became close friends with her two roommates – who each had completely different upbringings – and eventually began considering law school.

Tillman was accepted at the UGA School of Law and was offered the Founder's Scholarship. She described her time at the law school as "an absolute fundamental part of [her] maturation as a person and as a lawyer and as a woman, so [she is] forever grateful."

Once in Athens, the self-described "reserved" person befriended student groups like the Davenport-Benham Black Law Students Association and fellow Chapel Hill graduates who helped her find her place at the law school.

After graduating, she served as a judicial law clerk for Judge Richard C. Erwin of the U.S. District Court for North Carolina and then took a position in private practice where she was the firm's first African American employee.

held that African Americans were not citizens and therefore did not have the same rights as citizens. In defiance of that finding, Lincoln allowed the State Department to issue passports to black Americans. As passports were only given to citizens, the loophole gave the former slaves a claim to citizenship.

Lincoln acted in good faith, as Strauss would describe it. But other presidents have overstepped the constraints of their office to push political agendas, such as Andrew Jackson's actions after the Supreme Court found Georgia to be violating a treaty that guaranteed Cherokee Indians land when the state tried to seize the land after finding gold there.

Jackson used military force to evict the Cherokees from their lawfully guaranteed land. Such executive overreach is concerning and not limited to past administrations, Strauss added.

"I think that's a real risk," he said. "I'm not sure elevating judicial supremacy is the answer to that."

She said her previous experiences helped her navigate the job.

"You just have to get through," she said.

"You just can't stay in the uncomfortable or the painful. You just have to keep moving and overcoming."

Tillman eventually left that firm and served as an associate professor at the North Carolina Central University School of Law before she and her husband moved to Columbus, Georgia, where she took a position as a staff attorney at Aflac in 1996.

Since then, she has held several posts, from focusing on employment law to serving as the senior vice president of human resources to her current role.

In closing, Tillman noted that her entire career has been a series of experiences that she strives to get all she can from, and encouraged the lecture attendees to embrace their own failures and successes.

"I know that there will be times – you probably have already experienced some but if you haven't, keep living and you will – there'll be times that you will be so uncomfortable, despondent, dejected, depressed. Anything on that list, you'll be that and that's okay because that is what makes you stronger and better for the next thing," she said.

*The Edith House Lecture is sponsored by the Women Law Students Association in honor of one of the first female graduates of the School of Law. House, a native of Winder, Georgia, was co-valedictorian of the law class of 1925, the first to graduate women.*



Recent administrations, however, have mostly abided by Supreme Court decisions.

As justices have begun retiring, sitting presidents started stacking the courts with judges the presidents found sympathetic to their own political stances, something that allows that political party to continue to exert influence over U.S. policy even after the president in question has finished his term. Strauss said this will eventually lead to more confrontations between legislators and the Supreme Court.

*The Sibley Lecture Series, established in 1964 by the Charles Loidans Foundation of Atlanta in tribute to the late John A. Sibley, is designed to attract outstanding legal scholars of national prominence to the School of Law. Sibley was a 1911 graduate of the law school. This Sibley Lecture was part of UGA's 2018–19 Signature Lecture Series.*

*This Columns article has been adapted with permission from its author, UGA Marketing and Communications' Leigh Beeson.*