

Annual Summary Academic Year 2024-25

The Birnbaum Women's Leadership Center builds on NYU Law's rich history at the forefront of advancing women in the legal profession. The BWLC develops, empowers, and inspires the next generation of leaders in the law. We are a hub for thought leadership, incubating and championing ideas that foster equality in the workplace and society. We are strategic leaders who work to catalyze meaningful systemic change.

Leadership Development

The BWLC's Fellows Program, 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. The Sara Moss Women's Leadership Training Program, our annual intensive with expert facilitators, alumni/ae mentors, and an executive coach, took place January 13-17, 2025. Year-round support and engagement followed, including:

- Dedicated individual and group coaching to complement and reinforce key themes
- Pairing Fellows with accomplished NYU Law alumni/ae mentors, relationships that last through (and often beyond) graduation
- Social and networking events, celebrations of milestones, and tools to connect across cohorts
- Opportunities for BWLC alumni/ae Fellows to focus on early career skills, support, and camaraderie, including a new website feature, *Profiles in Leadership*



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 2024. *Lead With Your Strengths*, a session we present at the January intensive, has been offered in broad format at 1L Orientation since 2021. As we do each spring, we welcomed admitted students at an April 2025 reception held at Estée Lauder Companies cohosted by BWLC Co-Founder Sara Moss '74.

With the vision and leadership of the BWLC Advisory Board, formed in early 2024, we will next begin offering our signature leadership development programs to leading law firms (starting this fall).

Hub for Thought Leadership

This year we held and co-sponsored 25 high-profile gatherings featuring the nation's leading thinkers, writers, and doers – reaching thousands of in-person guests and virtual viewers.

We had the honor of presenting the *Sidney Shainwald Public Interest Lecture: A Conversation with The Honorable Elena Kagan*, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States on September 9, 2024. 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.



Our annual Dechert Symposium, *The Collateral Damage of Dobbs on Women's Health*, took place in March 2025, and addressed the wide range of health issues affecting women in today's complicated legal landscape – from cancer treatment, to assisted fertility, to midlife care – and examined new risks, challenges, and potential windows for progress.

Other event highlights:

- Together with the g2NY Recanati-Kaplan Talks and Newmark Civic Life Series, we are hosting a June 2025 three-part virtual public program on *Democracy and Reproductive Rights and Justice*.
- BWLC Fellow-in-Residence, Professor Jennifer Hendricks discussed her book *Essentially a Mother*, to connect the dots between the seemingly disparate laws that govern pregnancy in the context of abortion, surrogacy, parental rights, and reproductive technology.
- We participated in a nationwide student 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 joined in a satellite conversation with LaTosha Brown of Black Voters Matter and Penn Carey Law's Kate Shaw.
- Crooked Media's Alyssa Mastromonaco interviewed Jessica Valenti on campus for the October 2024 launch of her *New York Times* best-seller, *Abortion: Our Bodies, Their Lies, and the Truths We Use to Win*.
- *Personhood and Pregnancy*, presented 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.

Fellows-in-Residence. The BWLC Visiting Fellows-in-Residence program engages leading scholars and practitioners. This year we welcomed Dr. Sharon Malone, a medical expert, *New York Times* best-selling author, and a leading voice for women's health; and family law and reproductive justice scholar Jennifer Hendricks, Professor of Law at the University of Colorado Law School.

Strategic Public Leadership

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

As of April 2025, the BWLC proudly is home to the ERA Project, a leader in advancing sex-based equality through transformative legal and policy strategies. As this vital work begins its next chapter at NYU Law (it was launched in 2021 at Columbia Law School), the BWLC is grateful to the Sy Syms Foundation for its support – and thrilled to welcome the Project's founding director, attorney and advocate Ting Ting Cheng, whose stewardship ensures continuity and renewed momentum as the Project deepens and expands its impact.

The BWLC and Yale Law School's Democracy Initiative co-created *Democracy and Reproductive Rights and Justice*, an annual strategy session that brings together local, state, and national experts, legal scholars, leaders in philanthropy, pollsters, and media and narrative storytellers. This year marked the second annual convening, which took place at NYU Law in February 2025 and focused on challenges to the administrative state, building local and state power, and new messaging strategies.

Together with the Reproductive Justice Clinic and the national nonprofit Pregnancy Justice, the BWLC organized and hosted a September 2024 closed-door convening, *Personhood and Pregnancy*, to grapple with the growing attention to fetal personhood; this was followed by a public event for law students, advocates, and funders. In fall 2025, we will rejoin forces to convene a symposium and digital issue of the *NYU Review of Law and Social Change* on these issues.

In October 2024, 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 programming and initiatives at the intersection of democracy and gender. The BWLC presented the report at two full-day events hosted by Ford and attended by 100+ foundation executives.

More broadly, the BWLC engaged throughout the year with women's rights leaders and collaborated with national, state, and local gender equity organizations. And we boldly raised our voices: Professor Melissa Murray's prolific scholarship and media presence continued to educate audiences nationwide. Jennifer Weiss-Wolf published dozens of op-eds in outlets ranging from *TIME* Magazine to the *Los Angeles Times*, and as a regular contributor to the popular Substack *The Contrarian*.

Leadership & Staff

Melissa Murray
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Jennifer Weiss-Wolf
Executive Director

Ting Ting Cheng
Director, ERA Project

Sheri Arnold
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Shirley Dang
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Visiting Fellows-in-Residence

Jennifer (Jenny) Hendricks
University of Colorado Law School

Sharon Malone, MD
Alloy Women's Health

Executive Coach

Morenike Williams '07
Revision Coaching

Advisory Board

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KMZ Advisors

We would like to thank the following supporters:

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

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

Annual Dechert Symposium: The Collateral Damage of Dobbs on Women's Health – Dechert LLP

ERA Project – Sy Syms Foundation