

Biographies

Alfred J. Baker

Director Baker, the son of a retired lieutenant in the NYPD's elite Emergency Service Unit, began his journalism career in 1990 and was hired by the New York Daily News in early 1993. His career continued at Newsday, where he was a member of the newspaper's team awarded the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the crash of TWA Flight 800 in 1996. He joined the staff of The New York Times in 2000, focusing on criminal justice, state government, and policing in New York and abroad. Director Baker broke seminal stories on a wide array of policing practices such as stop-question-and-frisk, and on policies including the use of force, implicit bias, and counterterrorism and emergency management. He was a founding writer in the newspaper's "Murder in the 4-0" series that explored every homicide in the South Bronx in 2016, during a period of sustained lows in citywide crime. In July 2019, he was hired as the director of media relations for the New York City Police Department and was promoted two years later to the rank of executive director with the expanded portfolio of managing external affairs with the city agency's multiple law enforcement and government partners and other stakeholders. In July 2023, he completed the Harvard Kennedy School program for senior executives in state and local government. He will report to OCA's offices at 25 Beaver Street in Manhattan. He lives with his wife, a nurse practitioner in cardiology at Columbia University Medical Center, and their two school-age children in Rockville Centre, in Nassau County.

John Caher

As Senior Advisor for Strategic/ Technical Communications, John Caher manages the court system's social media, hosts its podcast program, and plays a key role in the scripting and production of various UCS filming projects, including an Emmy-nominated documentary on Franklin H. Williams, *A Bridge to Justice*. He is also co-founder of U-CAN, the court-based mentoring program, writes many of the court system's reports and assists judges in drafting speeches, articles, and op-eds. Caher, a former journalist specializing in legal reportage, has written over 12,000 by-lined articles in newspapers, magazines and journals and is the author or co-author of eight books.

Jordan Dressler

Jordan Dressler joined OCA in 2021 in the role of Special Counsel, in which he has provided management support to the court system's leadership regarding New York City Housing Court policies and programs, also developing initiatives linking litigants to critical benefits, services and other support. Previously, he served as New York City's first

Civil Justice Coordinator, appointed by the mayor to found and lead the City's Office of Civil Justice, which oversees the provision of free legal services in housing, immigration, and other essential matters. Additionally, as Civil Justice Coordinator, he helped launch the City's Universal Access legal services program for tenants facing eviction in the New York City Housing Court. He has also served as Interim Chief External Affairs Officer and Senior Advisor for Strategic Initiatives for New York City's Human Resources Administration (HRA), overseeing interagency and public affairs, and helping launch the City's municipal identification card program, IDNYC. Before joining HRA, he served as General Counsel in the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. He began his legal career as a criminal defense attorney with the Legal Aid Society in the Bronx and later in private practice. He is a graduate of Brown University and the Benjamin Cardozo School of Law.

Hon. Fern Fisher (ret.)

Judge Fern A. Fisher is the Executive Director of Legal Hand, Inc. and a Visiting Associate Professor of Law at the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University. Until July of 2017, she was Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts and also served as the Director of the New York State Courts Access to Justice Program. She was in charge of the New York City Housing Court for twenty-one years.

Judge Fisher's career started in the Civil Court as a Legal Services attorney practicing in Manhattan Housing Court. She served as Deputy Director of Harlem Legal Services, Inc. and as an Assistant Attorney General of the New York State Department of Law. For four years, she provided pro bono legal services to Harlem-based community organizations as a project director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. In 1989, she was appointed Judge of the Housing Part of the Civil Court, and later, in 1990, was elected to the Civil Court where she served as Deputy Supervising Judge. Judge Fisher was elected in 1993 to the Supreme Court of the State of New York. After serving in both the City and the Matrimonial Parts of Supreme Court, in December 1996 she was appointed Administrative Judge of the Civil Court where she served until March 2009 when she was appointed to her current position.

Judge Fisher received her B.A. summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa in 1975 from Howard University and received her J.D. in 1978 from Harvard Law School.

Danielle Hirsch

Daniele Hirsch is the Managing Director of the Court Consulting Division at the National Center for State Courts. In that capacity, Danielle is working to develop, guide and implement policies and procedures of court consulting operations to ensure success, high-quality work. In addition, Danielle has a professional focus on access to justice initiatives. She leads several large national access to justice projects for NCSC and serves

as lead staff for the new \$11M Eviction Diversion Initiative, and the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators' Access and Fairness Committee, the Post-Pandemic Planning Technology Supergroup, and the Blueprint for Racial Justice's Improving Diversity of the Bench, Bar and Workforce Working Group. In addition, Danielle is the co-creator and a co-host of Tiny Chats.

Before joining NCSC, Danielle was the Assistant Director of Civil Justice Division of the Administrative Office of Illinois, where Danielle was responsible for leading and managing the judicial branch's work to promote, facilitate and enhance access to justice in Illinois with a particular emphasis on efforts to remove barriers and increase the ease of interacting with courts by persons who cannot afford lawyers to represent their interests and needs. Before joining the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts, Danielle served as the Executive Director of the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice and the Director of Advocacy at The Chicago Bar Foundation. Among many highlights of her work, Danielle developed and managed an innovative new program, Illinois JusticeCorps, which places college and law students in courthouses to provide procedural assistance to people without lawyers. At the beginning of her career, Danielle clerked for the Honorable William Wayne Justice of the US District Court for the Western District of Texas and Justice ZM Yacoob of the Constitutional Court of South Africa.

Danielle brings a broad range of relevant experience to the NCSC. Danielle has authored numerous articles in law reviews, bar journals and other publications and frequently is called upon to speak at legal, academic, and nonprofit meetings and events.

Jazmine Leon, Ph.D.

Jazmine Leon is a Development, Public Relations, and Marketing professional with thirteen years of experience in fundraising, public relations, and marketing within the non-profit industry. Throughout her career, Ms. Leon has raised millions of dollars and generated over 2,000 media hits for various non-profit organizations.

Jazmine received her bachelor's degree in business administration from Manhattanville College in 2007, and in 2011 went on to receive her master's degree in Sports Business Management. In 2016, she received her Doctorate Degree in Business Administration with a specialization in Strategy and Innovation with Capella University after successfully defending and publishing her dissertation. Her research focused on the correlation between NBA video game participation and the consumption of NBA related products and services.

Ms. Leon currently works as a Chief Development Officer for Legal Services of the Hudson Valley and continues to volunteer with several NY Tri-state based non-profit organizations.

Amelia Lepore Sessions

Amelia Lepore Sessions is the District Executive for the Capital Region's Third Judicial, overseeing the human resources, security, technology, training, and operational needs of the state-paid courts in seven counties, managing a diverse non-judicial workforce of some 500 employees and an annual budget of over \$60 million. Prior to becoming the District Executive, she serviced as the Deputy District Executive for the Third Judicial District and before this, she worked as the District Project Manager for the Family Court Universal Case Management System at the OCA Division of Technology and Court Research, where she has worked since 2010. Prior to her tenure at the Division of Technology, she worked for OCA in the Trial Court Operations unit, and previously as a case manager with the Rensselaer County Department of Social Services with the juvenile delinquency population. She holds an M.S.P.A from Sage Graduate School in Albany where she graduated *summa cum laude* with the Richard A Mattox Award for Outstanding Public Administration Scholar.

Danielle N. Murray

Danielle Murray, Esq. is the Principal Law Clerk to the Honorable Vito M. DeStefano, Administrative Judge of the Tenth Judicial District, Nassau County. She is a 2011 graduate of Touro Law School and was admitted to practice law in the Appellate Division, Second Department, in March 2012. Prior to becoming Judge DeStefano's Principal Law Clerk, Danielle practiced almost exclusively in the fields of matrimonial and family law. As a practicing attorney, Ms. Murray has handled numerous matters from inception through trial, and has successfully defended appeals before the Appellate Division, Second Department. In 2022, she became the first female partner at her former firm. Danielle is a member of the Nassau County Women's Bar Association and was recently installed as their Recording Secretary. She is also an active member of the Nassau County Bar Association as well as the Nassau County Equal Justice in the Courts Committee and the Nassau County Women in the Courts Committee.

Christina Olevano

Christina Olevano is a passionate advocate for creating community change and a respected professional with over 15 years of experience in non-profit and grants management. Christina is also a 500-hour certified yoga instructor and a trainer for many curriculums including Community Resilience Model, Trauma Informed Resilience Response, and has dedicated her career to advancing health and equity in the communities she serves. She is a proud mom of two young men and a fur baby.

Hon. Christina Ryba

The Honorable Christina L. Ryba was elected by the people in the third judicial district to serve as Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York in 2015. Prior to beginning her term in 2016, she held various positions in the court system for the Office of Court Administration (OCA) and in the NYS Supreme Court Third Department Appellate Division including Special Projects Counsel to the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Courts Outside New York City and Special Projects Counsel to the Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, Third Department. Before working with the judiciary, Judge Ryba was an associate at Nixon Peabody where she practiced Labor/Employment Law and Commercial Litigation. She also served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of New York Litigation Bureau. Judge Ryba's additional public service includes appointments first as General Counsel and then as Deputy Director for the City of Albany Community Development Agency. She originally began her career in public service with the City of Albany Corporation Counsel's office. Judge Ryba is a member of the Albany Law School Board of Trustees, the Albany County Access to Justice Committee and is a Past-President of the Albany County Bar Association. She has also served multiple terms on the New York State Bar Association's House of Delegates.

Janet Sabel

Janet Sabel is the Founding Director of the Access to Justice Initiative at NYU Law School's Center on Civil Justice. The initiative is an ambitious effort to assist state courts in building robust, equitable and sustainable programs and policies to address the needs of self-represented persons in a reimagined civil court system. Leveraging the resources of NYU Law School, and marrying scholarship and advocacy, transformative ideas and practical steps, the initiative will work with judges and courts nationwide to build a more accessible, problem-solving civil court system that delivers justice to members of underserved communities in housing, family, consumer collection and small claims matters. Janet has worked for nearly forty years as an advocate for social and economic justice. Most recently, she was the Executive Director and Attorney-in-Chief of The Legal Aid Society in New York City, where she previously had spent the first decades of her professional career in Legal Aid's Civil Practice, representing clients in Housing Court, bringing law reform cases around disability and health law issues, running a neighborhood office, and leading the Immigration Law Unit before serving as Legal Aid's General Counsel and Chief Administrative Officer.

In between her stints at Legal Aid, Janet spent eight years at the New York State Attorney General's office, serving initially as Executive Deputy Attorney General for Social Justice and ultimately as a Chief Deputy to two Attorneys General. In these capacities, Janet oversaw the affirmative enforcement work of the Attorney General's

Social and Economic Justice Bureaus, including Civil Rights, Environmental Protection, Labor, Charities, Health Care, Consumer, Antitrust, and Investor Protection.

Janet's work has been recognized by Cranes (Notable Women in Law), City & State (Power 50, Nonprofit Power, Law Power), the New York State Bar Association (Public Interest Law), New York County Lawyers' Association (Public Service Award), and The Legal Aid Society (Servant of Justice Award).

Janet received her BA from Harvard College and her JD from NYU Law School where she was a Root Tilden scholar. Janet clerked on the First Circuit Court of Appeals for the Honorable Frank M. Coffin.

Evan Tanenbaum

Evan Tanenbaum is a Suffolk County District Court Judge sitting in the criminal parts. Prior to his appointment to the bench in February 2024, he was the Suffolk County Court's Access to Justice Coordinator. In 2017, he became the Principal Law Clerk to Justice Andrew A. Crecca, the District Administrative Judge of the Suffolk County Courts. Prior to working in the Suffolk County Courts, Judge Tanenbaum maintained a private law practice concentrating in family law, civil litigation, real property law, and corporate law. For approximately 20 years he was a member of the Assigned Counsel Panel for Suffolk County Family Court, the Attorneys for the Children Panel in Suffolk County, the Appellate Attorney Panel for Family Court matters, and an arbitrator in both Nassau and Suffolk County District Courts. He also served in the Suffolk County Attorney's Office from 1992-1994. He received his undergraduate degree from Lehigh University in 1986, and his law degree from Syracuse University College of Law in 1990.

Cheryl Vallee

Cheryl was first introduced to the Law, Order and Justice Center ("LOJ") in 1998 when she was a volunteer with the LOJ's Court Appointed Special Advocate Program or "CASA." Following two years of volunteering, she accepted a part-time position as CASA Assistant. Eventually, Cheryl become the Coordinator of the CASA program and later, the Director. During this time, she helped facilitate the merger of Schenectady, Albany, and Rensselaer County CASA programs forming CASA of the Capital Region. Cheryl served on the NYS CASA Board from 2007-2023 as Vice President of Legislative Issues. During her time as a member of the Board, CASA was able to have legislation passed and signed by Governor Cuomo codifying CASA in the NYS Court Rules.

In 2013, Cheryl became the Executive Director of the Center for Community Justice (formerly LOJ) and enjoys the challenges of an agency with a mix of programs. The programs at CCJ include Schenectady County Reentry Task Force (est. 2009), CASA (est. in Schenectady in 1989), Legal Hand Call-in Center serving Schenectady and Albany Counties (est. 2022) and Community Service (est. late 1980's).

Cheryl is a graduate of Marist College and holds a certificate from NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services as Offender workforce Development Specialist Certificate.

Hillary A. Warner

Hillary Warner is a passionate and dedicated public health leader who grew up on Syracuse's Northside. Before becoming the Access and Equal Justice Coordinator for the 5th Judicial District this past January, she served as the Manager of Planned Parenthood's Outreach & Education Programs throughout Onondaga County. Hillary is also a Master of Public Health candidate at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Hon. Rowan D. Wilson

Rowan D. Wilson, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the State of New York, was born in Pomona, California in 1960, and grew up in Berkeley, California. He received his A.B. degree from Harvard College in 1981, and his J.D. degree from Harvard Law School in 1984. He was admitted to the bar of the State of California in 1985, and the bar of the State of New York in 1987. From 1984 to 1986, he served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable James R. Browning, Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, based in San Francisco, California.

In 1986, he joined the firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York City as an associate, and was elected to partnership there in 1991, in which position he continued until February 2017. On January 15, 2017, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo nominated Judge Wilson to serve as an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals, and the New York State Senate confirmed his nomination on February 6, 2017. On April 10, 2023, Governor Kathy Hochul nominated Judge Wilson to serve as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the State of New York. The New York Senate confirmed his nomination on April 18, 2023. While in private practice, Judge Wilson served on the boards of several charitable and not-for-profit organizations and handled numerous pro bono matters.

Katie Young

Kathryne M. Young joined the GW Law faculty in 2022. She is an internationally recognized expert in legal consciousness—the study of how people understand and come to hold beliefs about the law, and the implications of these beliefs for law, legal systems, and the lives of everyday people. Professor Young's research lies at the intersection of law and sociology. She investigates how law maps onto the realities of the social world, and the consequences for access to justice in both civil and criminal realms. Additionally, she has done empirical research on a broad range of sociolegal topics, including police-citizen interactions, parole hearings, illegal gambling, and legal education. Her first book, *How to Be Sort of Happy in Law School*, has been featured at dozens of law schools throughout the U.S.

Professor Young's work has been published in Harvard Law Review, Law & Society Review, California Law Review, Stanford Law & Policy Review, Fordham Law Review, the Federal Sentencing Reporter, and numerous other law reviews and social science journals. She has been cited by the Washington State Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court. Professor Young is also an Associate Editor of the peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal Law & Society Review and is heavily involved in the Law & Society Association, where she co-founded and runs two Collaborative Research Networks: one on Everyday Legality and another on Rural Sociology. In 2020–21, Professor Young was named an ABF/JPB Access to Justice Scholar by the American Bar Foundation. Her research has also been supported by the National Science Foundation.

Before coming to GW Law, Kathryne M. Young was a sociology professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she won the university's Distinguished Teaching Award. She also taught Evidence at Western New England Law School, where students voted her Adjunct Professor of the Year in 2022. At GW, Professor Young will teach Evidence and Professional Responsibility, as well as courses related to criminal law and procedure, legal education, access to justice, and the sociology of law.