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MAKING AN IMPACT: PANEL OF FORMER *JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW* EDITORS

SEPTEMBER 24, 2021 PANEL

Caroline Cirillo: Welcome everyone to the Panel titled, "Making an Impact," a panel of *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* Editors. My name is Caroline Cirillo,[1] and I am the current Editor-in-Chief of Volume 54 of the *Journal of International Law* ("JIL"). This panel is a part of the annual Cox Center Symposium. The conference this year celebrates the 30th anniversary of the endowment of the Frederick K. Cox International Law Center and the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Public International Law and Policy Group.

Alireza Nourani-Dargiri: My name is Alireza Nourani-Dargiri,[2] and I am the Symposium Editor of Volume 54 of the *Journal of International Law*. First off, we want to thank the *Journal of International Law* alumni for being here with us today. Established in 1968, the *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* is one of the world's oldest and most prestigious international law journals. We are very excited to talk about our alumni's experiences with the international law program at Case Western and how their experiences shaped their future careers in international law.

Caroline Cirillo: We are going to start off by introducing our four wonderful panelists. First, we have Douglas Pilawa.[3] He was the Executive Articles Editor of Volume 51, and he is currently with Squire Patton Boggs and the International Arbitration Council, and he is currently an adjunct professor. Next, we have Niki Dasarathy.[4] She was

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3. Douglas Pilawa was the Executive Articles Editor for Volume 51 of *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* and is currently an Associate at Squire Patton Boggs. For more on Douglas Pilawa, see https://www.squirepattonboggs.com/en/professionals/p/pilawa-douglas (last visited Mar. 30, 2022).

4. Niki Dasarathy was the Articles Editor for Volume 41 of *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* and is currently the Program Director at the ABA Rule of Law Initiative. For more on Niki Dasarathy, see https://www.linkedin.com/in/niki-dasarathy-a926684/ (last visited Mar. 30, 2022).

the Articles Editor of Volume 41, and she is currently the Program Director at the ABA Rule of Law Initiative.

Alireza Nourani-Dargiri: Also, on Volume 41, we have Philip Hadji,[5] who was the Editor-in-Chief and now is the Assistant General Counsel for the Department of the Navy. Last but not least, we have Christopher Rassi,[6] who was Volume 34's Symposium Editor. He is now the Chief of Staff for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. For the first half of the panel, we are going to ask all of you a couple questions about your career paths, your job search, and any advice that you that have for students. In the last half, we will open it up for Q&A.

Caroline Cirillo: For our first question, to help the audience get to know you a little bit better, we are going to ask you a two-part question. Besides JIL, what other activities were you involved in in law school, and did you have any international focused internships while you were here? Douglas, would you like to start?

Douglas Pilawa: Apart from JIL, I was on the Vis International Arbitration Moot Court Team. I do international arbitration every day now, and I feel like it is the most lifelike thing I did in law school, with respect to my job right now. That is even down to what my briefs look like in everyday life. I love JIL—do not get me wrong—and I love the work I did with JIL, but the highlight of my time at Case Western was really doing that. I am the coach of the Vis Team here at Case now. I guess you could say, after my first year of law school, I did an international-esque internship. I worked at the U.S. Court of International Trade in Lower Manhattan. Case Western has historically had a fantastic relationship with that court. It is a federal courthouse that deals with trade issues. I mostly did anti-dumping duties, countervailing duties, and things like that. There is an international component to it. It was a wonderful experience, and I am glad I got the chance to do it. I know the court is still a good friend of the law school. My second internship was when I was with Squire Patton Boggs doing international arbitration work.

5. Philip Hadji was the Editor-in-Chief for Volume 41 of *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* and currently works in the Office of the General Counsel for the Department of the Navy. For more on Philip Hadji, see https://www.linkedin.com/in/philip-hadji-b714391/ (last visited Mar. 30, 2022).

6. Christopher Rassi was the Symposium Editor for Volume 34 of *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* and currently serves as the Director for the Office of the Secretary General for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. For more on Christopher Rassi, see https://case.edu/law/our-school/news/alumni-spotlight-christopher-rassi-director-office-secretary-general-international-federation-red-cross-and-red-crescent-societies (last visited Mar. 30, 2022).

Niki Dasarathy: When I was in law school, in addition to JIL, I was the Managing Editor of War Crimes Prosecution Watch. I also was the Treasurer of the International Law Society. I did Jessup, and I was the Chief Communications Officer of the International Law Students Association, which is the association that runs the Jessup Moot Court Competition, and it also has an arm that focuses on law students. So, I had a decent amount of international law activities during law school. In terms of internships . . . I should have looked at my resume before I came here because it has been a long time. My first summer of 1L year, I was at the International Trade Center in Geneva, Switzerland. It is part of the World Trade Organization ("WTO"). For my third year in law school, I had an externship at the ECCC, which is the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Philip Hadji: While I was in law school, I was on JIL. I do not think I did any other extracurriculars. I think I lived in the JIL office; it was a lot of work. I saw that volume sitting around, and it was quite big, and I was like, "wow!" I think that is bigger than anything we published, but we did publish a lot of them. In terms of internships, I did not do any that were international focused, but they kept me busy too.

Christopher Rassi: I did some internships and some other extracurricular activities. I also was an intern at the International Trade Center ("ITC"), and, in fact, I think I was the first Case intern to go there. I was looking for an internship in Geneva twenty years ago. I knew I wanted to be in Geneva. I knew I wanted to be in an international organization for my first summer after my 1L year. I started to do research on every organization I could find to see who had interesting internship opportunities, and that is how I found it. Twenty years later, I think we still have the program going, and I still go to the ITC and the WTO and see people that I knew twenty years ago as an intern. One is a very good friend of mine.

When I was in law school, I was interested in working on international trade, international criminal law, and humanitarian law. If you look at the internships I did, I just tried a bunch of different things. My second internship was with the Yugoslavia Tribunal in the Hague, where I did something completely different and went away from international trade law. Over the next decade, I played around with trade law, international criminal law, and international humanitarian law, but I did a few other things. I ran a moot court competition at the time when I was still a law student called the Jean-Pictet International Moot Court Competition. Case has participated on and off for years. It is probably the most important international humanitarian law moot court competition in the world, and I am still on the board today.

Caroline Cirillo: Fantastic experiences—as you see, Case has a lot to offer. Now, joining us we have Katelyn Masetta-Alvarez.[7] She was the Executive Notes Editor of Volume 50, and she is currently with the Department of Justice. Welcome, Katelyn! Our first question we had for the panelists was a two-part question to help the audience learn more about you. Besides JIL, what other activities were you involved in, and did you have any international focused internships?

Katelyn Masetta-Alvarez: Certainly. I work for the Office of Immigration Litigation. We do district court work, and we also do appellate work.

While I was in law school, I was involved in JIL. It obviously was a fantastic experience. If you all are interested in journal, I highly recommend it, but, beyond that, I was also involved in the Mock Trial Team. I also did Moot Court, and, in my 1L year, I was involved in the ICC Moot Court. All three activities I thought were incredibly beneficial, not only to my law school experience, but also to my current day-to-day job doing district court work, as well as appellate work in the immigration context. During law school, I worked at the FBI. I also worked at an immigration law firm here in Cleveland. At the time, it was called Robert Brown. I believe now it is called Brown Immigration. But, I did not have any international law clerkships. I was always a little bit more focused on immigration and also on federal government work, which is why the FBI and working at an immigration law firm really fit what I was trying to do.

Alireza Nourani-Dargiri: Katelyn, we are going to stick with you since you touched on it a little bit, but when did you know you wanted to have a career with an international focus?

Katelyn Masetta-Alvarez: When I graduated from undergrad, I lived and worked in Honduras. I was working at an HIV/AIDS organization down there. I saw a lot of inequality—I feel like that word does not even match the gravity of what I am trying to explain—but I saw so much poverty and international inequality that I knew that I wanted to be a part of something that would help that situation. When I came back to the United States in 2011, there were not that many jobs, especially in the international field, that paid, so I actually ended up working as a paralegal at an immigration law firm, and I fell in love with immigration law. After working at an immigration firm, I went and worked at a non-profit immigration organization in Texas helping kids at the border getting DACA. I knew that was something I wanted to pursue, but it started when I lived in another country.

7. Katelyn Masetta-Alvarez was the Executive Notes Editor for Volume 50 of *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* and currently works in the Office of Immigration Litigation for the Department of Justice in Cleveland, Ohio.

Douglas Pilawa: I had a life before law school that was between France and the United States. I had a love affair with France ever since I was young, and I thought I was going to be a French professor or something like that—it did not work out. I moved back to the United States in 2013, and I said to myself, "how can I get back there doing something that can pay more than 500 euros a month?" I kid you not, I searched the following words in a Boolean search on Google, "French law" and "international," just those words. I discovered international arbitration in the fall of 2013. I knew I wanted to do that, and the reason why France factors into that is because the French legal system and the United States legal system used to have a lot of hostilities towards international arbitration and legal systems around the world. France was extremely pro-arbitration for pretty much for the past seventy-five years. The International Chamber of Commerce International Court of Arbitration, for example, is headquartered in Paris. It is a major hub for my world. I discovered through Case Western, where both of my parents actually went for law school, that we have the dual degree program with Paris Dauphine in France, so I could get a French legal degree and my J.D. at the same time. In 2013, I took several steps to hopefully make that dream become reality. The simple decision to speak a different language has had the most radical effect on my entire life. That is where it all started.

Niki Dasarathy: I came to Case because of the international law program, and maybe many of you also came to Case for that same exact reason. I always knew I wanted to do international law. I had no idea what that meant. I came in thinking, "I want to do human rights work." "I want to be a human rights lawyer." I had no idea what that meant. I took some courses and had some internships, but I still did not really know what I wanted to do. Things were not jumping out at me.

I thought I was going to prosecute really bad guys and work on war crimes, and I think that, if you had asked me that in law school, that is probably what I would have said. I was looking to have an externship through Case at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Phnom Penh, and I liked it, but I did not really like practicing law. That is kind of hard to figure out when you are in law school, but what I did like was the concept of rule of law. What is interesting about the Cambodia Tribunal is that it is a hybrid tribunal, meaning that for every international, there is a national counterpart. I was an extern there, and there were Cambodian interns and externs there, as well. I actually really, really liked working with my Cambodian colleagues, and I liked learning from them. They were starting from ground zero for reforming their legal system, and I was actually more interested in that then I was with the work at the tribunal. I graduated from law school in 2009, which is one of the lost classes, lost years because of the economy. My job that I graduated with was deferred for a year, so I went back to

Cambodia. I actually worked with a human rights organization on the ground. What we were doing there was trying to advocate for greater rights for Cambodians living in Cambodia, and that is actually what I loved doing. I loved actually rolling up my sleeves, working with national counterparts, learning from them, and providing any sort of international best practices and expertise, and then I realized that that was what I wanted to do for a living. While I do not practice, per se, I am using my legal degree because of all of the knowledge and expertise I have to move forward and work with other people around the world. That is what I have been doing for almost a decade now.

Philip Hadji: I will start with whether I practice international law or not. I do not know if it is fair to say that I practice international law. I work with the Department of the Navy Office of General Counsel, and we do touch on international issues all the time, but I do not think that is my primary interest or my primary focus. I have always been more interested in the business side of law, so that is what I am involved in more, but we do touch on international law in our practice all the time. We have to interpret status of forces agreements and things like that. I would not really say that's the focus of what I do.

Going back to law school, I would say that I definitely had an interest in international law. My parents were both born in Greece, and I have always been interested in international issues, but I think, when I got to law school, similar to what Niki was saying, I did not really have an interest in international criminal law. I did not really see a way to go practice in those fields. I did not really connect with that when I got to law school, but to the extent that I practice international law, it is definitely from the business side.

Christopher Rassi: I am not sure I knew exactly what I wanted to do at first. I think I always had a bit of a love for working for international organizations—furthering multilateralism, I guess you would say—so I saw myself as probably having an international career. I have reschooled a few times, and a part of my message is do not be afraid to reschool. I started off probably thinking that I was going to practice international criminal law or international humanitarian law my whole career. I went back and forth a few times, as I mentioned. I practiced international trade and was in private practice as an international trade lawyer. I was a litigator, and I enjoy that very much, but I realized I wanted to give international criminal law one final chance and spent time working for tribunals. Always, in the end, I thought I wanted to do something in the field and not necessarily working on just one case at a time. I ended up with what I am doing now, which probably took what I loved the most about all the different experiences that I have had. Niki, you are doing it in one way. I am doing it in a way that has nothing really to do with the law anymore. I do not practice law on a daily basis. There are lots of lawyers

negotiating agreements and trying to address some rights of individuals who may not have their rights upheld.

I just came back yesterday. I was in Haiti, and just to give a couple examples of the work that I was doing there: I was working with communities on the ground and using the experiences that I have had previously but not necessarily "being a lawyer." I was able to add to all the different experiences of my peers to be able to help run an emergency response after an earthquake and help deal with the government. This may not be necessarily what I thought I would be doing as a lawyer . . . .

Caroline Cirillo: I think that a lot of students will say that international law applications are really intimidating. Often, they require four different languages! Does knowing a foreign language make or break applications in your field? Christopher, do you want to go ahead and start?

Christopher Rassi: Sure. It helps a lot, especially when you are working—again, furthering multilateralism—in an international organization. It has definitely helped me. Knowing French has helped me to be able to work in different countries, be able to work with colleagues. I work in an organization right now with between sixty to seventy field offices with a membership organization of 192 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies across the world.

Being able to work in two languages allows me to communicate. I have probably added more influence and worked in more contexts than if I only had one language. Now, I have colleagues who only work in one language. Most of the time that ends up being English, and that is fine too, but it definitely helps you make an impact early on and probably be noticed.

[The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' vacancy notices often] say that another one of our working languages is preferred or that our working languages are mandatory. That depends on the role that you want to do. If you are applying for a job, for example, in West Africa, French is extremely important, probably even more important than being able to work in English.

I have worked in the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. I do not speak Arabic. Could it have helped me? Yeah, probably a bit more. It really depends on what you want to be doing, what part of the world you want to work in, and also what area of the law that you want to work in.

Philip Hadji: I speak Greek. My family is Greek. I cannot ever say that that language has helped me directly. Not many people speak Greek. But, when I think about languages, it has had a profound impact on me. I think when learning different languages, you really learn how a different culture thinks and what they choose to put into words and

how those choices are different from culture to culture. I think that that basic knowledge from a foreign language definitely helped me. During my work, I have traveled to all kinds of countries. When you are in a room with someone from a different culture, working on something collaboratively or on opposing sides, it really does help to have cultural understanding.

Niki Dasarathy: Yeah, that was very well said. For my job, having a second language is not required. It definitely helps, and I think it builds trust with other partners. I definitely think it helps with having a cultural understanding. That being said, if you do not speak another language, do not let that dissuade you. I think that it is just as important to have some humility and interest in other cultures, and, especially if you are meeting somebody from a different country, having a bit of knowledge about their country. Knowing major aspects of the culture or the history is really important. I think that, even if you speak a language fluently, if you do not know anything about the person sitting across from you, that is going to hurt you a lot more than anything else. I would not say that if you do not know French or do not know Spanish or Arabic, you need to learn it immediately. It definitely helps, but I do not think it is required.

Douglas Pilawa: I echo pretty much what everyone has said here, and I do not want anyone to be upset if they do not speak a second language. But, to those who do speak a second or third language, I would say capitalize on that as much you can. It helps in my world. There have been times where I have been sitting at my desk, and the sole reason why I am getting a phone call is because I speak fluent French. Someone from some office needs me to help them because they know that I speak it.

But, at the same time, English is a really important language, so having a command of the English language—especially the written form of the English language—is very helpful. Persuasive writing is incredibly important in my world as well . . . We look for applicants that have [foreign language skills], but, at the same time, I have a hearing in two months, and it is all done in English. All the pleadings have been done in English. We have had to persuade a tribunal that speaks only English.

[Foreign language skills] are not an end all be all, but if you do have those skills, I would just pound on the table with that. Show those abilities. That has helped me so much—having that ability—and I have leaned on that so much for the past decade of my life.

Katelyn Masetta-Alvarez: In the immigration world, I think, especially if you are in the private practice or even in the nonprofit practice, having a second language is incredibly important. It is something that immigration firms and nonprofits will look for. If you

are interested in going into the Department of Justice or working at a U.S. Attorney's Office, for everything we do, we have translators, so it is really not necessary. It is definitely a bonus on your application if you do speak another language, and it has helped me connect with people if I am doing a deposition or even in a trial if I am questioning a witness. They have a translator, but I can look at them, they can see I understand what they are saying, and there is a little bit more of a connection. Conversation flows a little bit easier, and sometimes you catch little mistakes that the translators make. That can be helpful, but certainly if you are interested in doing the DOJ Honors Program or, again, working for a U.S. Attorney's Office someday or even at the Department of State, it is not required.

Alireza Nourani-Dargiri: Alright, trés bien! This will be the last question. Then, we will open it up to a Q&A session. In the current climate, it is pretty hard for law students around the world to find jobs. Niki, you mentioned it is pretty similar to what the situation was in 2009. How would you recommend law students navigate the realm to try to find jobs? Do you have any specific contacts that we should reach out to or any direct advice that we should go after?

Douglas Pilawa: My advice would be to find a mentor. I found what I wanted to do, and I was certain of what I wanted to do, but what really helped me was finding the person who was doing exactly what I wanted to do. It just so happened that that person was an adjunct faculty member here at Case Western. He is my boss right now. It is pure happenstance. I did not even know that before I came here. He is my boss right now. He is two doors down from me. He is the Global Co-chair of International Arbitration at our firm. His name is Stephen Anway. I pestered him for two years to hire me, and I said, "please, you won't regret it." I think I won that war of attrition. He just essentially gave up and hired me.

In all seriousness, I think it is really important to find a mentor because, at the end of the day, if you are just submitting a resume, you are a name on a piece of paper. Human interaction—some form of connection—I think is what you really need to do. My best piece of advice for you is—to the extent that you have international projects or if you are trying to fulfill your writing requirement or you are pursuing a Note—pick a subject that will give you a perfect excuse to then approach someone in the field that you want to work in. Say to them, "hey, can I talk to you because I am working for this project? Can I maybe pick your brain because I . . . . ?" Once you get your foot in the door, then talk jobs. I get emails all the time from people that want to have coffee with me. I think, "okay, I know where this is going to go, and it feels artificial."

When I was on JIL, I did a project. I specifically chose a project that would force me, or give me the ability, to talk to people doing

exactly what I wanted to do under the guise of, "I am doing a research project, wink, wink." I got in through that. If you are required to do something by the law school, at least make it somewhat worthwhile. That is a poor choice of words, but choose something that can at least put you into the position where you can talk to someone that does the very job that you want to do. It is way easier to approach someone who is high up in an organization, saying, "I am doing a research paper, and I am interested in your views on this research topic or on this area of law." Find a mentor and utilize the time at law school to navigate the career search that way. That is my advice.

Niki Dasarathy: That is great advice, and I think those are all really good points. When I graduated, I had a job and then, three months after I took the bar, that job was taken away, and I did not have a job. So, like I said, I went back to Cambodia for a bit, but I could not get full-time work because I did not have any experience. I came back to New York, where I am from, and was able to get a job that I did not love, but I was practicing for a few years. I really wanted to get back into the international world. I had all these internships. I had all these experiences at Case, and nobody was hiring. It was extremely frustrating. I also did not know exactly what I wanted to do, so I cast an extremely wide net.

The other thing that I did, that I highly encourage all of you to do, is talk to everyone in every single profession of international law that existed. I talked to people at the United Nations. I talked to people at State. I talked to people at nonprofit organizations. I talked to people overseas. I talked to people at law firms. I talked to everybody because I wanted to know what every single person was doing. And, at the end of the day, lawyers love to talk about themselves. I would ask people, "what do you do?" And they would tell me, and I would say, that sounds really interesting, or I would say, "oh my, that sounds terrible." I started to slowly get an impression of the different kinds of things that existed out there because there is a lot out there, and when you graduate law school, you maybe know one percent of it. I really, really suggest you have those conversations and be persistent. At the end of every single conversation that I would have with somebody, whether in person or over the phone, I would say, "do you have somebody else you can recommend that I can speak to?" Everyone had somebody else, and because I was being referred by someone else, the next person actually spoke to me. They did not ignore my email. That also really helped. When I finally had my job interview, I think I had spoken to over sixty or seventy people, and I had perfected what I wanted to do because I had talked to so many people. The job interview where I got my current job was the easiest job interview that I have ever had in my life because I came in with so much confidence and so much knowledge, even though I had zero experience. I am still there, so it worked out.

Katelyn Masetta-Alvarez: [To the audience] I have a quick question: is there anyone who is interested in working for the government at all? Maybe someday, even if not directly out of law school? Okay, fantastic. I think that it can be difficult to get into the government because, unlike a private practice, where you get to know someone and then they will hire you, in the government . . . it is based on merit.

I got into the Department of Justice through the Department of Justice Honors Program, which is a very competitive program. Of course, you need great grades, you need to do a journal, and they like to see some other extracurricular activities, as well, but one thing that is very important for us—and I am on the hiring committee now so I look at people who are coming right out of law school—to see is government work. If you are interested in going to DOJ—the Department of State's one of my clients; so is United States Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS"). I talk to them quite a bit, too—it is also important to them that you have government experience. When we get applicants, we want people that really want to do public service work and do not want to just go to the government for a few years and then go to a big firm and make more money. We really want to see people that want to be public servants for the long haul. If you are interested in doing international law in the federal government—I do not think the state governments really do a whole lot of international law—definitely get some experience. I highly, highly recommend if you are interested in DOJ, look at the DOJ Summer Law Intern Program ("SLIP"). That is one way into the Department of Justice right out of law school. SLIP is the internship program that we have, and sometimes we make direct offers for the Honors Program if you are a fantastic intern. That is the best way to get into the government.

Philip Hadji: I work for the Department of the Navy in the Office of General Counsel, and I agree with everything. I can make a plug right now. We are hiring for a program that I believe is being advertised at Case right now. I always send emails to Case, and I say, "please send this to your students, please have them reach out to me if they are interested, please make sure that they do not just submit their resume." I have done this many, many times.

Only one student to date has ever called me, and she was offered a job. She wound up at DOJ over there. She did not take it, but I see it as an example—not that I can do that again—but if you reach out to people that are in the organization, you are going to understand the organization. You are going to interview better. You are going to be prepared for the interview. You are going to put your best foot forward, and, if you do not do that, you are not going to get hired because it is very competitive. That would be my tip on interviewing.

The other thing I wanted to say too is that I graduated in 2009. Like Niki said, it was a bad year. One thing that I noticed among

students that did well in the job market is that a lot of them had something else other than their Juris Doctor, whether that be some other dual-degree program. When I graduated from Case Western, I did not have a job. I struggled. I did document review for a while. I did an internship for a while in the Department of Defense, and then I also went back to school. I got an LLM degree in government procurement law, which is a big focus of what I do. I know others that have gone back to school to get LLMs in tax law. There is a lot of interesting international work in tax. The tax code is rewritten every few years, and there is a lot of money to hire tax lawyers.

Christopher Rassi: Katelyn asked the question, who wants to work for the government? Maybe I will ask you, who wants to work for international organizations? It is very, very different. International organizations rarely take lawyers who have just graduated from law school and just taken the bar. I would say, if you have an interest in working for international organizations, whether it is the Red Cross or a specialized tribunal, be creative in how you start off your career. I think a lot of you probably decided early on what you wanted to focus on. I did not, and I worked for a law firm for five years, where I was doing a couple different types of law and international trade litigation. I worked for the U.N.

To get those jobs, at first, I really needed some basic, basic legal experience. Working as a young associate in a law firm is what allowed me to prove that I was a great drafter because you have to be if you want to move up. I worked on my litigation skills and my drafting skills. You do not have to do it in a law firm. You can do it in the government. You can do it as public defender. You can do it as a clerk. But, you have to.

A lot of people come to me and say, "I want to work for the international criminal tribunal for whatever, or I want to work for the International Criminal Court." Do an internship, but rarely will you get hired straight out. So, an internship is important, and it is great first experience. It is great because internships help you identify what you want to focus on, and having that passion is very important, right? But then you have to try other things. I am pretty happy where I am now, and I think I have probably figured out where I want to spend the next decade, not necessarily in this position, but in this field of work.

Try different things. Do not feel that the first job is going to be your last job because it is not true, and probably your second job and your third job will not be either. Now, for some of us, that may not be the case, but go into every experience with an open mind and be creative. Look for it. Talking to different potential mentors is very important, too, and that will help you identify different possibilities.

Caroline Cirillo: Thank you all for your valuable input. Right now, we are going to open the floor for questions. . . Who wants to start?

Attendee 1: Hello, everyone. First, thank you for being here today. My question is, are there any particular moments that stick out in your mind while you have been in international law that really helped shape who you are and your career path?

Caroline Cirillo: Anyone can jump in.

Christopher Rassi: I do not know if this is personal or professional. When I look at every experience as a lawyer—I am not practicing legal work on a daily basis—but, no matter where I am, if I am on a visit, I am surrounded by lawyers, and they are handling all the really important legal work. I will give you an example: I was in Haiti up until this morning. The attention was not on the earthquake anymore. The attention was on what was happening in Texas with migrants that were being sent back to Haiti. You start thinking as a lawyer . . . what are the legal regimes right now that are actually protecting these individuals? What are the obligations on the United States? What are the obligations on Haiti to accept returnees? What are the obligations on third states where you have migrants that are moving through on a regular basis? How can you look at how to use the law to address a very difficult situation right now without being too emotional? But thinking of it as, "what are concrete steps organizations can take and that States should be taking?" I think that no matter how far removed you are from law on a daily basis and your job, being a lawyer helps you, your organizations, or anyone you could possibly be talking to. For me, every experience—whether I am practicing or not—I find very useful.

Douglas Pilawa: The one that sticks out to me is that you do not really get how much of an impact you can make on somebody, even in a world like mine. The first hearing that I did was for a company that was sued for $250 million dollars—our legal team was brought in five weeks before the hearing—company decided that things were going to go really bad if they did not make a change. Within five weeks, our team got up to speed and had this very intense hearing. We ultimately won these claims, and the witnesses were living it every day. They were putting their hearts into it, and you can see how happy they are.

It sounds somewhat cliché, but I did not get that opportunity in law school because most of it is fictitious. I did not do anything in law school that was actually really helping people. I work in a world where I represent countries, and I represent, usually, corporations, and there is lots of money at stake. You might think to yourself, there is no human element of that, but there is a human element to everything.

There really is—even though you might not see it. So, seeing this contracts manager who is just an employee at this company, seeing how happy he was because over ten years of his life he was living this story, was when it really hit me that I might be an associate at a big law firm, but the skills that I have or what I do as a lawyer actually can affect people. I just have to look at it a little bit differently. That one sticks out.

Attendee 2: What are some of the most challenging aspects about practicing international law?

Niki Dasarathy: I can start. I think one of the most challenging things for me personally is that the work that I do is focused on strengthening legal systems and rule of law around the world. Read the news lately? That is really challenging. I have been at my position for almost nine years, and I have seen the pendulum swing unfortunately many times in the wrong direction, and it is extremely frustrating. I think in this line of work, and I think in a lot of different paths of law where you are focusing on human rights . . . whether that be domestic or overseas, it can be really, really frustrating. Also, you are playing the long game; you do not get that kind of immediate satisfaction. Sometimes you have to wait ten, fifteen, twenty years to actually see results, and then sometimes things . . . move in the wrong direction due to a lot of different forces and a lot of different reasons. And it can be really, really hard. I keep saying "frustrating" because I cannot think of another word.

On the other hand, there are small victories. You were talking about the personal connections; that is a really good point. For example, when I started, I was working with another lawyer who was very fairly junior, Jordanian, lovely person. We got along really, really well, and then she continued to move on to her career from this junior lawyer, and now she is leading a human rights organization in Jordan, and she is the executive director of it. Through working with her, I saw her rise through the ranks, and she has now this really esteemed and wonderful position. Those are the kinds of small victories that are really, really exciting to see—looking at things in that kind of micro way—but sometimes it can be really hard. A lot of work that I do is focused on Syria, and the last nine years have been hard if you are trying to actually do something that is helpful, but I think that is probably true in a lot of these careers.

Attendee 3: The artificiality of networking emails is the bane of my existence. I hate it with a fiery, burning passion. It is necessary, but, as the recipients of those emails, is there anything that you particularly hate to see? What do you like? Then, in those conversations that follow up, is there anything that has hopefully stood

out in a good way, questions that students ask that either make you think or you think elicit good responses?

Katelyn Masetta-Alvarez: I have only had a few students reach out to me since I graduated law school, so I might not be the best person to answer this. There was one student who was genuinely—I could just tell— interested in immigration law and genuinely interested in working for our office. I felt like her initial email was pretty straightforward and pretty cookie cutter, but when I actually talked to her, I could just tell that this was something she wanted to go into long-term, and I do not always get that from students, so I really enjoyed our conversation. That is probably my best answer: be genuine with what you want to do. I think that that can go a long way, even if you do not want to be in my field. If you want to do something else, just be honest.

Douglas Pilawa: I would say be genuine about your intentions. It is really obvious. I have been in positions where it is really obvious where someone maybe did not do their homework or was not really aware of the reason why they were talking to me. And it is hard to pinpoint how that is obvious, but I have been in a couple positions where it is obvious. If you are just simply asking to figure out what somebody does in their life, that is fine. Just make sure that that is what you are conveying, and try to make it as organic as possible, because it is so hard—it really is hard—to just randomly talk to somebody. But, as we have noted, lawyers love talking about themselves. Make that the topic of conversation. Seriously, some of the most pleasant conversations that I have had is [when] someone goes, "look, I have no idea what you do. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?" "Yeah, sure" There is no pretext to that, right? It is just, "I do not know what you do. What do you do?" It is a really easy conversation for me to have because then I also do not feel like it is this awkward, "is this person asking me for a job?" type of conversation. Where is this going?

Philip Hadji: I agree with everything that has been said. I would also add, be politely persistent. Sometimes people get busy, and they did not mean to blow you off. Or ask if there is anybody else you could talk to. I think that is a really useful thing to do, and it has been very helpful when I have done that in the past. The other thing I would say is that I never really knew when I was a student whether I should send my resume or not. Would that seem like I am asking for a job? I do not know if others disagree, but I like to see someone's resume before I talk to them. It gives me a sense of what to expect, and I think it could help me with my end of the conversation.

Niki Dasarathy: I like that too.

Christopher Rassi: It does not have to be artificial. I think everyone has said that, right? It does not. But, do your homework . . . Sometimes we get lots of emails, and sometimes we forget about them, and it is not because we do not want to respond. Sometimes I realize after several months—I am searching for another email—and I see that a student wrote me and I did not respond. I feel bad, and I do respond, sometimes six months later, and say, I am so sorry. Do a bit of work when you are going to contact someone. People sometimes contact me and say that they want to hear about my work with an organization that I am not working for or in a field that I am not working in. If you are going to be that specific, show that you have done your work, but you can also just say, "I have heard you have had some interesting experiences."

Caroline Cirillo: This is excellent advice and I am certain that many of the students here today will find it useful! Unfortunately, that is all the time we have for today, but I wish to thank our alumni panelists for their time and thoughtful responses regarding international law careers.

For our attendees, we would like to remind you that the Symposium continues tomorrow . . . .