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## Your Career: A Path to Scholarship

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## Your Career: A Path to Scholarship

Golden Gate Dean Rachel Van Cleave interviews Professor Benedetta Faedi Duramy about her journey through academia.

Rachel Van Cleave

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*How do you make a career of scholarship? There is no one way. After clerking for a federal court of appeals judge, I taught legal research and writing, and completed a J.S.M. before landing a tenure-track teaching position at a law school. My colleague Benedetta Faedi Duramy practiced law in a firm setting and found her calling while engaged in pro bono work that informed her research for her S.J.D. before teaching. Her unique path, combining practice, pro bono service and scholarly research has led to both a new career in teaching at Golden Gate University School of Law and a compelling, groundbreaking book to be published in April 2014. Recently, I had the opportunity to ask Prof. Faedi Duramy more about her unique journey as lawyer, scholar and professor.*

**Q: What type of practice did you engage in before pursuing a career in legal academia?**

A: I worked for about four years as an associate attorney in London for the corporate and project finance departments of Clifford Chance and Chiomenti Studio Legale, London office, in association with Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. My job consisted primarily of advising clients regarding securitization transactions and project financing in Eastern European countries as well as in developing countries. My law practice experience represented a great opportunity for me to be involved in interesting transactions, and deal with high profile clients and smart colleagues. I learned how to organize my job efficiently and work in a team, under pressure and with tight deadlines.

**Q: What was appealing to you about academia?**

A: While I was working in practice, I kept nurturing my interest in human rights and gender issues by volunteering as a pro bono attorney for several law clinics on women's issues. In addition, I was working as a research assistant at the School of Law at Queen Mary, University of London, in the field of human rights and women's rights. My strong interest in these topics prompted me to pursue a job in legal academia. The freedom and rewards of research and writing, the contribution I can make on the current literature and policy debate, and finally, the impact I may have on future lawyers through my teaching, all strengthen my commitment to this job every day.

**Q: You have done extensive research on women in Haiti who were both victims and perpetrators of violence. What prompted you to engage in this research?**

A: Before joining Stanford Law School for my doctoral program, I collaborated with the Child Protection Unit of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, where I contributed to the Report of the Secretary General on children and armed

conflict to the Security Council, focusing in particular on sexual violence against girls.

The experience in Haiti significantly informed my doctoral research on the cultural root causes of discriminatory practices and sexual violence against women and girls in Haiti. Initially, my empirical research study focused on discriminatory thinking and gender disparity, which by degrading girls' status within the Haitian social hierarchies, generate patterns of abuse inside the household and become weapons of gender-based violence in the public sphere.

Eventually the focus of my research expanded to include also the incentives and rationale fostering victims of rape and sexual abuse joining armed groups and becoming perpetrators of violence. Contrary to traditional studies of this nature that primarily focus on women as victims, my work proposes an innovative understanding of girls' and women's internalization of gender stereotypes and experience with violence. Namely, that through producing common patterns of retaliation, girls and women may transform their "victim status" into a new one of autonomous agency as perpetrators of violence. My doctoral research has culminated in a book I completed while teaching law at GGU Law. "Gender and Violence in Haiti: Women's Path from Victims to Agents" will be published by Rutgers University Press in April 2014.

**Q: How did you set about planning for this project? What were the concrete steps you took?**

A: This book, which explores the conditions, incentives, and rationale that induce women victims of sexual violence to join armed groups and to become involved in community violence, was inspired by my doctoral research. The observations are based on 12 months of fieldwork in the three major urban settings of Haiti primarily affected by armed violence—Port-au-Prince, Cap Haitien and Gonaive. The participants in the research included rape victims and representatives of international and national institutions and civil society organizations dealing with gender-based violence. Using findings from a combination of in-depth interviews, observation and focus group discussions, the book attempts to deepen the reader's understanding of women's decision-making processes, the interplay between gender-based violence against women and women's own violence, and ultimately, the extent to which female aggression committed in a context of armed violence should be interpreted as a survival strategy or a deliberate choice for retaliation.

**Q: How do you incorporate your scholarship into your teaching?**

A: I am fortunate to be able to teach subjects related to my research interests like international human rights, and gender and children's issues in international law. These allow me to share my scholarship with students in class and to learn from their perspectives during discussions. At Golden Gate University School of Law, we offer courses that include a scholarly writing component, providing students with opportunities to develop research, analytical, critical thinking and writing skills. Advising students in this effort reinforces my own research practices and is a perfect example of how my scholarship merges into effective teaching and supervision.

**Q: Why do you teach?**

A: At GGU law we are fortunate to have students from different countries and backgrounds, making teaching a diverse learning experience for professors as well. What I especially love about teaching is the impact you may have on young people by preparing them to become knowledgeable, ethical and compassionate lawyers and members of their communities. Moreover, the writing process is often a solitary experience for a scholar and teaching creates enriching interactions with smart, motivated students.

*Golden Gate University School of Law's Dean Rachel Van Cleave interviewed GGU Law Associate Professor Benedetta Faedi Duramy.*



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