



D.C. Criminal Code Reform Commission

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Symposium on Criminal Code Reform June 16 and 17, 2021

Panelist Biographies

Panel 1: The Roots of the DC Criminal Code

Date/Time: June 16th, 10:30am-12:00pm

Keynote Speaker & Moderator:

James Forman Jr. (J. Skelly Wright Professor of Law, Yale Law School)

Panelists:

Premal Dharia (Director, Institute to End Mass Incarceration, Harvard Law School)

Renee Hutchins (Dean and Professor of Law, University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law)

Olinda Moyd (Adjunct Professor and Supervising Attorney, Howard University School of Law, Clinical Law Center - Reentry Clinic)

Tyrone Walker (Associate, Justice Policy Institute)

James Forman Jr. (*J. Skelly Wright Professor of Law, Yale Law School*)

James Forman Jr. is J. Skelly Wright Professor of Law at Yale Law School. He attended public schools in Detroit and New York City before graduating from the Atlanta Public Schools. After attending Brown University and Yale Law School, he worked as a law clerk for Judge William Norris of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor of the U.S. Supreme Court.

After clerking, he joined the Public Defender Service in Washington, DC, where for six years, he represented both juveniles and adults charged with crimes. During his time as a public defender, Professor Forman became frustrated with the lack of education and job training opportunities for his clients. So in 1997, along with David Domenici, he started the Maya Angelou Public Charter School, an alternative school for school dropouts and youth who had previously been arrested. A decade later, in 2007, Maya Angelou School expanded and agreed to run the school inside DC's juvenile prison. That school, which had long been an abysmal failure, has been transformed under the leadership of the Maya Angelou staff; the court monitor overseeing DC's juvenile system called the turnaround "extraordinary."

Forman taught at Georgetown Law from 2003 to 2011, when he joined the Yale faculty. At Yale, he teaches Criminal Law and a seminar called Inside Out: Issues in Criminal Justice, in which Yale law students study alongside men and women incarcerated in state and federal prisons.

Professor Forman teaches and writes in the areas of criminal procedure and criminal law policy, constitutional law, juvenile justice, and education law and policy. His particular interests are schools, prisons, and police, and those institutions' race and class dimensions. Professor Forman's first book, [Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America](#), was on many top 10 lists, including the New York Times' 10 Best Books of 2017, and was awarded the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction.

Premal Dharia (*Director, Institute to End Mass Incarceration, Harvard Law School*)

Premal Dharia, the founder and director of the Defender Impact Initiative, has joined Harvard Law School as the inaugural executive director of the Institute to End Mass Incarceration. For nearly fifteen years, Dharia worked on the criminal legal system's frontlines, representing individual clients as a public defender, first as a trial and supervising attorney at the nation's leading public defense office in Washington, DC, then at the federal public defender in Baltimore, and finally at the military commission in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. After nearly a decade and a half representing individual clients, Dharia leveraged her substantial expertise toward the broader fight for systemic justice as the Director of Litigation for Civil Rights Corps. In 2019, Dharia started building a new organization to incorporate public defender advocacy into the broader push for systemic criminal justice change. She was a Criminal Justice Fellow at the Reflective Democracy Campaign, which supported the launch of the Defender Impact Initiative (DII) and Dharia's investigation into the intersection of reflective democracy and the criminal system. Dharia is bringing the work and strategies of DII to the new Institute at Harvard, which will officially launch later this summer.

Renee Hutchins (*Dean and Professor of Law, University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law*)

Renée McDonald Hutchins is Dean and Professor of Law of the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law (UDC Law). Dean Hutchins joined UDC Law as dean in April 2019 after fourteen years on the faculty at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, including as Jacob A. France Professor of Public Interest Law, co-director of the school's Clinical Law Program, and founding director of the Appellate and Post-Conviction Advocacy Clinic. Dean Hutchins is widely recognized as a leading expert on the Fourth Amendment and criminal appellate practice. Her legal scholarship, which sits at the intersection of criminal procedure and social science, has been published in high-impact journals like the *UCLA Law Review* and *NYU Journal of Legislation and Public Policy*, among others. Her scholarship has been cited by numerous U.S. Courts of Appeals and state appellate courts on issues-of-the-day ranging from Fourth Amendment protections for location data to the intricacies of credibility assessments by trial juries.

In 2017, Dean Hutchins was elected to serve as a member of the prestigious American Law Institute, a national association of distinguished lawyers, judges, and academics that works to clarify and improve the law through the publication of Restatements of the Law and Model Codes. She remains highly engaged in practice due to her extensive experience spanning federal and state courts across the nation, including the high courts of Maryland and New York. Dean Hutchins is currently serving her third four-year term on Maryland's Appellate Courts Judicial Nominating Commission and is a former board member for the Judicial Institute of Maryland. She is an active member of the Association of American Law Schools Standing Committee on Clinical Legal Education and a past board member of the Clinical Legal Education Association, Dean Hutchins has advanced standards for clinical legal excellence and promoted the importance of the clinical model to achieving access to justice.

A frequent commentator in both local and national media on issues ranging from post-conviction relief to the constitutional dimensions of criminal procedure, Dean Hutchins has provided legal analysis and insight for outlets including MSNBC, "Voice of America," and CSPAN-TV's "Landmark Cases" series. She is a regular contributor to local media as a strong believer in the importance of community legal education. While a faculty member at Maryland Carey Law, Hutchins was often featured in the Baltimore Sun and made appearances on Baltimore's public radio station WYPR. Dean Hutchins graduated *cum laude* with a B.A. in Mathematics from Spelman College, America's oldest historically black liberal arts college for women. She went on to receive her J.D. from Yale Law School, where she was Chair of the Moot Court Board of Directors. Shortly after graduating, Dean Hutchins clerked for the Hon. Nathaniel R. Jones of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, a distinguished jurist who directed litigation for the NAACP as its General Counsel from 1969 to 1979 prior to his appointment to the federal bench.

Olinda Moyd (Adjunct Professor and Supervising Attorney, Howard University School of Law, Clinical Law Center - Reentry Clinic)

Prior to her retirement in February 2020, Olinda Moyd practiced for 30 years at the DC Public Defender Service as Staff Attorney (13 years) and then Chief Attorney of the Parole Division (17 years). She provided direct representation to thousands of clients, both at administrative hearings and at proceedings in DC Superior Court and the United States District Court. As division chief, she supervised staff, including a team of attorneys, a legal assistant, an investigation group and numerous law clerks. During her tenure, her greatest accomplishments included increasing parole attorney staff positions, drafting attorney practice guidelines, designing and implementing the staff telework policy and increasing the division spending budget. In addition, she oversaw the summer law clerk program and conducted skills training seminars for the CJA Bar, the DC Bar Association and local law firms on parole representation.

Her litigation experiences include filing a class action against the U.S. Parole Commission challenging constitutional due process violations of persons sentenced under the DC code. As a result of this action, the federal court issued a settlement order establishing mandatory guidelines and procedures, which are now codified in the Code of Federal Regulations. Her persistent and zealous advocacy led the Parole Commission to develop alternative diversion programs to address allegations of violation behavior, avoiding loss of liberty for many. She continues to consult and collaborate with local advocacy groups to return local control of parole authority in the District.

She also has a passion for expanding the educational knowledge of law students through clinical education, especially about parole and reentry obstacles. For the last 20 years Olinda trained and supervised clinical students at the Georgetown University Law Center, Criminal Law Clinic as they represented clients at administrative hearings. She coordinated the parole orientation and training for the clinic students and fellows, provided guidance to the parole attorney supervisors and directly supervised numerous students as they represented clients. The Georgetown clinic students who she supervised also teach Legal Writing at the Jessup Corrections Institution under my supervision. She continues to support and supervise students who teach at Jessup.

Olinda has a history with Howard Law, when the PDS Parole Division partnered with Howard University Law School, Criminal Justice Clinic Professors Tamara Meekins and Josephine Ross as we trained and supervised law students who provided direct representation (2005-2008). In the summer 2000 and fall 2001 semesters, she was a visiting professor at the University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law teaching the Prisoner's Rights and Advocacy Clinic. Furthermore, she currently serves on the Law Clinic Kuje Prison Advisory Committee with several other local law school clinicians.

This advisory committee trains law students and supervisors at three law schools in Abuja, Nigeria as they provide legal aid services to detainees awaiting trial. In the fall, 2019, she conducted a two-day training titled, Investigation 101 for 105 Nigerian law students from the Baze, Nile and University of Abuja law schools. She continues to serve on this advisory committee while also mentoring two Nigerian legal fellows through the Nigerian Justice Education Fellowship program.

Olinda currently serves on several boards and committees, including serving as Co-Chair of the Criminal Justice Committee at the Council for Court Excellence and Chair of the Behind the Walls Workgroup at The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform. She remains active in several grass-roots reentry organizations led by formerly incarcerated persons in both Maryland and the District.

Richard Schmechel (*Executive Director, DC Criminal Code Reform Commission*)

Richard Schmechel is an attorney who has served as the Executive Director of the CCRC since its beginning in 2016, responsible for all aspects of the agency's operations and legal work. He has co-taught a course on criminal law reform as an adjunct faculty member at the George Washington University Law School and served several years as a Project Director at the DC Sentencing and Criminal Code Reform Commission. Richard's career in criminal justice began as a Soros Justice Fellow working with the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia. In addition, he has served several years as a political appointee to Commissioners at the U.S Commission on Civil Rights. Richard received a BA in the history of science and mathematics and philosophy from St. John's College, a MA in philosophy from Yale University, and a JD from Yale Law School.

Tyrone Walker (*Director of Reentry Services, Georgetown University Prisons and Justice Initiative*)

Tyrone met his first mentor during his first month of incarceration when he was 19. This mentor recognized Tyrone's intellect and aptitude, and he empowered Tyrone to take the steps to overturn his initial sentence, shorten the time he would serve, and get his GED.

While incarcerated, Tyrone tutored other incarcerated men studying for their GEDs, and he took it upon himself to mentor young men in his facility. Recognized for his leadership abilities, he formally became a mentor in the Young Men Emerging Unit, a program in the DC Department of Correction's Central Treatment Facility, which matched young men with mentors. Through this program, Tyrone and his peers mentored a group of 25 young men between the ages of 18-25. Upon being released after serving 25 years in prison, he completed the Georgetown University Pivot Program, during which he served as a Pivot Fellow with JPI. Through his fellowship and now as a full-time Associate at JPI he utilizes his experience, expertise and a passion for prison reform to advocate for change.

Tyrone also has translated his passion for coaching and mentoring into his work as a professional personal trainer instructor, which allowed him not only to help others in his facility toward their fitness goals, but to help them become personal trainers as well. Going forward, Tyrone has a passion for helping others reach their goals, and he also continues to love all things fitness.

He has a particular interest in helping cancer survivors design exercise and nutrition plans to support their well-being and continued recovery. He also dreams of starting a weightlifting competition for at-risk youth, giving them training on clean eating and building strength. In his spare time, Tyrone is an avid Scrabble player. In his new life, he is enjoying spending time with his two children and three grandchildren, watching football, and reading the New York Times on Sundays.

Panel 2: The CCRC Recommendations

Date/Time: June 17th, 10:30am-11:30am

Moderator:

Richard Schmechel (Executive Director, DC Criminal Code Reform Commission)

Panelists:

Don Braman (Associate Professor of Law, George Washington University Law School)

Laura Hankins (General Counsel, DC Public Defender Service)

Richard Schmechel (Executive Director, Criminal Code Reform Commission)

Elana Suttentberg (Special Counsel for Legislative Affairs, United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia)

Elizabeth A. Wieser (Deputy Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia)

Don Braman (*Associate Professor of Law, George Washington University Law School*)

Don Braman is an Associate Professor of Law at The George Washington Law School and a Senior Social Scientist in The Lab @ DC, a unit within the Office of the City Administrator. Don conducts research on criminal law, trust in government, and science communication, including large-scale randomized control studies of public perceptions related to crime, guns, policing, and trust in government. He teaches classes on policing, public safety policy, and criminal law. In addition to journal articles, book chapters, and commentaries, he is the author of the book *Doing Time on the Outside: Incarceration and Family Life in Urban America*. Don holds a J.D. in law and Ph.D. in anthropology from Yale University and a B.A. from Columbia.

Laura Hankins (*General Counsel, DC Public Defender Service*)

Laura Hankins is the General Counsel for the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia ("PDS"). As General Counsel, Ms. Hankins is the attorney for the agency and provides counsel to the executive management team on issues related to PDS operations, resolves ethical conflicts, and as necessary works with outside counsel on legal matters involving PDS. Prior to becoming the General Counsel, Ms. Hankins served as Special Counsel to the Director. For sixteen years, Ms. Hankins was responsible for monitoring and commenting on legislation before the DC Council that raise criminal justice, juvenile justice, and mental health issues. She worked on over 50 Council bills covering such issues as post-conviction DNA testing and innocence protection, criminal records sealing, confidentiality of juvenile records, civil forfeiture, and mandatory minimum prison sentences.

As PDS's representative on the DC Sentencing and Criminal Code Revision Commission, Ms. Hankins helped create and assisted with the implementation of the District's voluntary sentencing guidelines, which are consulted in every Superior Court criminal case involving felonies. She also served on the committee responsible for drafting the District's pattern criminal

jury instructions. Ms. Hankins was a member of the Legal Ethics Committee of the DC Bar from 2010 to 2016 and became a member of the Rules of Professional Conduct Review Committee of the DC Bar in 2015. She began her legal career in 1992 in the Trial Division at PDS, defending indigent juveniles and adults accused of crimes. In 1997, she joined the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. as an associate counsel with the Criminal Justice Project. At LDF, Ms. Hankins represented clients in both state and federal courts. Ms. Hankins returned to PDS in January 2000 to do policy work. She received a B.A. in economics from Brown University and a J.D. with honors from Harvard Law School.

Richard Schmechel (*Executive Director, DC Criminal Code Reform Commission*)

Richard Schmechel has served as the Executive Director of the CCRC since its beginning in 2016, responsible for all aspects of the agency's operations and legal work. He has co-taught a course on criminal law reform as an adjunct faculty member at the George Washington University Law School and served several years as a Project Director at the DC Sentencing and Criminal Code Reform Commission. Richard's career in criminal justice began as a Soros Justice Fellow working with the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia. In addition, he has served several years as a political appointee to Commissioners at the U.S Commission on Civil Rights. Richard received a BA in the history of science and mathematics and philosophy from St. John's College, a MA in philosophy from Yale University, and a JD from Yale Law School.

Elana Suttentberg (*Special Counsel for Legislative Affairs, United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia*)

Elana Suttentberg serves as Special Counsel for Legislative Affairs at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. She has worked at the U.S. Attorney's Office for nearly a decade and, prior to serving Special Counsel, she worked as a senior AUSA prosecuting domestic violence and sex crimes committed against both children and adults. Before joining the U.S. Attorney's Office, she served as a law clerk to the Honorable Royce C. Lamberth on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. She received her law degree from Georgetown University Law Center and her undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania. She lives in the District with her husband and two young children.

Elizabeth A. Wieser (*Deputy Attorney General in charge of OAG's Public Safety Division*)

Previously, she headed that division's Juvenile Section, leading a team of prosecutors who handle the District's juvenile crime cases. Prior to joining OAG, Ms. Wieser's career included stints as an attorney in private practice and as a clerk for the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. She holds bachelor's and law degrees from Georgetown University.

Panel 3: The CCRC Recommendations & Criminal Justice Reform

Date/Time: June 17th, 11:35am-12:35pm

Opening Comments & Moderator:

Marc Schindler (Executive Director, Justice Policy Institute)

Panelists:

Paul Butler (Albert Brick Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law School; CCRC Advisory Group Member)

Parisa Dehghani-Tafti (Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington County, Virginia)

Halim Flowers (Artist, Activist, and Ambassador for Represent Justice)

Patrice Sulton (Founder and Executive Director, DC Justice Lab)

Marc Schindler (*Executive Director, Justice Policy Institute*)

As JPI's executive director, Marc Schindler is a dedicated justice system reformer, while serving in a variety of roles. Most recently, he was a partner at a DC-based nonprofit philanthropic investment organization, Venture Philanthropy Partners. He served in a variety of leadership roles at DC's juvenile justice agency, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) including Chief of Staff and Interim Director.

Schindler also served as Staff Attorney with the Youth Law Center, advocating for the rights of young people in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. He is also a former Baltimore City public defender. Schindler is a recognized expert in the field, providing commentary in the national media, including on CNN and NPR, and is also the author of numerous articles and book chapters.

Paul Butler (*Albert Brick Professor of Law; Georgetown University Law Center*)

Paul Butler is the Albert Brick Professor in Law at Georgetown University Law Center and a legal analyst on MSNBC. During the 2017-18 academic year he was the Bennett Boskey Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School. He holds an honorary Doctor of Law Degree from City University of New York.

Professor Butler is one of the nation's most frequently consulted scholars on issues of race and criminal justice. His work has been profiled on 60 Minutes, Nightline, and The ABC, CBS and NBC Evening News. He lectures regularly for the American Bar Association and the NAACP, and at colleges, law schools, and community organizations throughout the United States. He serves on the District of Columbia Code Revision Commission as an appointee of the DC City Council.

Professor Butler's scholarship has been published in many leading scholarly journals, including the Georgetown Law Journal, Yale Law Journal, Harvard Law Review, Stanford Law Review and the UCLA Law Review. He was named the Professor of the Year award three times by the GW graduating class. He was elected to the American Law Institute in 2003. Professor Butler's book "Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice" received the Harry Chapin Media award.

His book “Chokehold: Policing Black Men” was published in July 2017. The Washington Post named it one of the 50 best non-fiction books of 2017. Chokehold was also named one of the best books of the year by Kirkus Reviews and the Atlanta Journal Constitution. The New York Times described Chokehold as the best book on criminal justice reform since The New Jim Crow. It was a finalist for the 2018 NAACP Image Award for best non-fiction.

Professor Butler served as a federal prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice, where his specialty was public corruption. His prosecutions included a United States Senator, three FBI agents, and several other law enforcement officials.

Professor Butler is a graduate of Yale University and Harvard Law School.

Parisa Dehghani-Tafti (*Commonwealth’s Attorney for Arlington County, Virginia*)

Parisa Dehghani-Tafti is the Commonwealth’s Attorney for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. Parisa was first elected to a four-year term in November 2019. Parisa comes to the office of Commonwealth’s Attorney with a twenty-year record of criminal justice reform as an innocence protection attorney, a public defender, and a law professor.

As an innocence protection attorney, Parisa served as the Legal Director for the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project, where she successfully helped exonerate innocent individuals in DC, Virginia, and Maryland incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. She litigated at all levels of state and federal courts, including the United States Supreme Court and the Supreme Court of Virginia. As a public defender with the District of Columbia’s Public Defender Service, Parisa litigated cases of constitutional magnitude and won the first DNA exoneration in DC, which led the FBI to conduct an audit of all of its cases involving hair microscopy evidence; she also represented individual clients in parole proceedings. As a law professor at Georgetown University Law Center and at George Washington University School of Law, Parisa has helped train the next generation of criminal law attorneys, teaching courses on wrongful convictions.

Parisa graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a BA in philosophy and comparative literature and obtained a JD from New York University School of Law. Prior to law school, she volunteered with the San Francisco Public Defender where she helped the office set up guidelines to identify and place clients eligible for one of the first drug courts in the country into appropriate treatment programs. Parisa’s most formative law school experience was as a student-attorney in NYU’s Capital Defender Clinic, representing death penalty clients with the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. After graduation, Parisa served as a public interest Chesterfield Smith Fellow at Holland and Knight, where she continued to work on those death penalty cases and ultimately helped free Wilbert Rideau from prison after he’d been convicted in trials tainted with racial bias.

Parisa immigrated to the United States with her parents as a young child. She is committed to fair prosecutorial practices that promote both safety and justice, and firmly believes that the measure of safety and the quality of justice we receive should not depend on where we live, who we love, the dollars in our bank accounts, the color of our skin, or which citizenship papers we hold or don’t hold.

Parisa served as Press Chair and Member of the Steering Committee for the Arlington County Democratic Committee, and as a member of the Criminal Justice Committee for the Arlington Chapter of the NAACP. She is a long time resident of Arlington along with her husband, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center, and their two children who attend public school.

Halim Flowers (*Artist, Activist, and Ambassador for Represent Justice*)

Halim Flowers is an American artist, writer, activist, and ambassador for [Represent Justice](#).

In 1997, at the age of 16, Halim was charged as an adult for being an accomplice to a felony murder in Washington DC and sentenced to 40 years to life. His experiences as a child inside the DC Department of Corrections were filmed in the Emmy award-winning documentary [Thug Life In DC](#). During his incarceration, he discovered his love for literature and the arts, and he began freestyle rapping and writing poetry. He enrolled in the Georgetown Prison And Justice Initiative to become a credit earning student at Georgetown University and served as a mentor in the Young Men Emerging unit inside of the DC DOC. In 2019, after the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act (IRAA) was enacted into DC law to apply retroactively to any person that had been convicted of an offense before the age of 18, Halim was released back into society.

Since his release, Halim has worked with Kim Kardashian for her documentary [The Justice Project](#), collaborated with Kanye West on a spoken word performance, and received the [Halcyon Arts Lab](#) and [Echoing Green](#) fellowships. He has spoken on panels at universities and conferences around the country about the impact of the arts and entrepreneurship to correct our criminal injustice system. He also started painting and recording his spoken word performances, with an album currently in production.

Visit Halim's website [here](#), his [personal Instagram page](#), and his [art page](#). Listen to the Choral Commons Podcast, where Halim was a guest, [here](#).

Patrice Sulton (*Founder and Executive Director, DC Justice Lab*)

Patrice Amandla Sulton, founder and Executive Director of DC Justice Lab, is an attorney who specializes in criminal defense and civil rights. For more than 15 years, Patrice has worked to advance racial justice in the courts and alongside community-based movements in Washington, DC.

Patrice previously served as Senior Attorney Advisor to the Criminal Code Reform Commission, an independent agency within the District of Columbia government, established to comprehensively revise the District's Criminal Code. She is a member of the newly-formed DC Police Reform Commission, tasked with providing recommendations to the Council of the District of Columbia.

Prior to her work drafting legislation, Patrice was a trial lawyer in private practice, where she represented clients in DC courts and federal courts nationwide. Patrice earned a reputation as a focused and fierce advocate for her clients and is known for leveraging her deep understanding of criminal law and procedure to approach cases thoughtfully and holistically.

Patrice is a passionate instructor and counsels law professionals, policymakers and community advocates on constitutional law, criminal justice, racial justice, advocacy, and systems change. She is a Professorial Lecturer in Law at The George Washington University Law School, where she teaches Adjudicatory Criminal Procedure and Trial Advocacy. She regularly devises and delivers trial skills and criminal law trainings for organizations such as the National Institute of Trial Advocacy, Rising for Justice (formerly DC Law Students in Court), the DC Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia.

Before launching her own nonprofit, Patrice served on the Board of Directors for leading organizations focused on justice and equality, including NAACP DC, DC Lawyers for Youth, DC Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the New York Urban League Young Professionals. Patrice was named a “Rising Star” by Super Lawyers Magazine, the Greater Washington Area Chapter of the National Bar Association, and The National Law Journal and Legal Times. She earned her BA in Philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her JD from The George Washington University Law School.