

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER | PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY NETWORK | FALL INSTITUTE 2011  
MT WASHINGTON CONFERENCE CENTER | BALTIMORE, MD | OCTOBER 12-15, 2011

- ❖ **Helen Blank** ([hblank@nwlc.org](mailto:hblank@nwlc.org)) is Director of Leadership and Public Policy, working on child care and early education issues, at the National Women's Law Center. Previously Ms. Blank served 24 years as the director of the Child Care and Development Division at the Children's Defense Fund. While at the Children's Defense Fund, Ms. Blank spearheaded a variety of efforts for improved early learning legislation. In an effort to pass the Act for Better Child Care, the first comprehensive federal child care legislation, she organized the Alliance for Better Child Care. Additionally she developed a guide for the implementation of the legislation that was enacted, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, that was widely used by state policymakers and child care leaders. In 1991, she led an effective campaign to convince the Bush administration to issue regulations for the Child Care and Development Block Grant that allowed states to use the new federal funds in the best interests of children. She was also a leader in efforts to expand and improve the child care provisions in welfare reform, subsequently developing a guide to assist states in implementing the provisions. In addition, she created the Child Care Now! Campaign, an ongoing initiative, which attempts to focus attention on early care and education.

She has authored and co-authored numerous major studies and reports on state child care policies including *A Center Piece of the Child Care Puzzle*; *Providing Prekindergarten in Child Care Centers*; *Getting Organized: Unionizing Home-Based Child Care Providers*; *Close to Home: State Strategies to Strengthen and Support Family, Friend and Neighbor Care*; *In Their Own Voices: Parents and Providers Struggling with Child Care Cuts*; *Working Together for Children: Head Start and Child Care Partnerships*; *Seeds of Success: Pre-Kindergarten Initiatives*; and *A Fragile Foundation: State Child Care Assistance Policies*, and numerous articles and papers on child care policies.

While at CDF, she created and led the Emerging Leaders Program for up and coming leaders in early care and education and at the National Women's Law Center co-directs PLAN, the Progressive Leadership and Advocacy Network for emerging leaders focusing on issues affecting low-income women and their families. Helen has a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from Hunter College of the City University of New York.

- ❖ **Ellen Buchman** ([buchman@civilrights.org](mailto:buchman@civilrights.org)) is Vice President, Field Operations, for The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (The Leadership Conference) and The Leadership Conference Education Fund (The Education Fund). Ellen spends much of her time developing strategies for the

coalition's field campaigns; leading and managing the field operations staff in support of the efforts of state and local coalition organizations in educating and mobilizing their respective members; building and conducting training around coalition-model organizing campaigns in the states/regions; creating materials and tools that enable The Leadership Conference's national, state and local partners and leaders to alert and educate their constituencies of federal public policy efforts; and meeting with and speaking to national coalition organizations that work with The Leadership Conference/The Education Fund on the issues effecting civil and equal rights at the federal, state, and local levels. Further, Ellen has also authored training materials and an outreach plan to engage activists in The Leadership Conference/The Education Fund priority issues in states across the country. She has been a member of the staff of The Leadership Conference since 2003.

- ❖ **Stephanie Drahan** ([sdrahan@nwlc.org](mailto:sdrahan@nwlc.org)) is the Outreach Associate for Health and Reproductive Rights. Prior to joining NWLC, Stephanie worked as the Communications Associate for the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals managing their media and policy work, and committing a significant amount of time to the reproductive health and the environment program area. Stephanie also worked as a Legislative Aide to Massachusetts State Representative Katherine Clark, and has interned and volunteered with a wide range of reproductive rights organizations. Stephanie holds a B.A. in Women's Studies with a minor in Government from Skidmore College and a Graduate Certificate in Women and Politics and Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Boston. Stephanie's unhealthy obsessions include trashy reality television, sports, all things pop culture, and cheese.
- ❖ **Fatima Goss Graves** ([fgraves@nwlc.org](mailto:fgraves@nwlc.org)) is Vice President for Education and Employment at the National Women's Law Center, where she works to promote the rights of women and girls at school and in the workplace. Fatima advocates and litigates core legal and policy issues relating to at-risk girls in school, including those that impact pregnant and parenting students, students in a hostile school climate and students participating in athletics. She further works to advance equal pay for equal work, expand opportunities for women in nontraditional fields, and ensure the development of fundamental legal principles of equal opportunity. She uses a number of advocacy strategies in her work on these issues ranging from public education and legislative advocacy to litigation, including briefs in the Supreme Court and federal courts of appeals. Prior to joining the Center, she worked as an appellate and trial litigator at Mayer Brown LLP. She began her career as a law clerk for the Honorable Diane P. Wood of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Fatima is a graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles and Yale Law School.
- ❖ **Mary Ignatius** ([mignatius@rrnetwork.org](mailto:mignatius@rrnetwork.org)) is the Statewide Organizer of Parent Voices. Parent Voices (PV), a project of the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, is a parent-led grassroots organization fighting to make quality child care accessible and affordable for all families. As the Statewide Organizer since August 2005, Mary has infused new and existing Parent Voices chapters with her infectious energy, and sparked expanded interest and enthusiasm. As a young mother, a college-educated woman of color, and a second generation immigrant who grew up in the Bay Area and is committed to social and economic justice, Mary brings passion and inspiration to her peers in Parent Voices. Mary holds a Master of Social Work, Administration and Social Planning from Temple University and a Bachelor of Social Work from Rutgers University. Her previous

experience includes work with the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, Community Legal Services in Philadelphia, Instructor- City College of San Francisco, and Project SURVIVE. Mary loves to travel and is inspired by the curiosity and wonder that her 2 year old son brings to this world.

- ❖ **Drew Lebby** ([dlebby@verizon.net](mailto:dlebby@verizon.net)) is the founding partner of The Performance Group, a company that assists organizations in maximizing their investment in large-scale change. He has worked with US Sprint, the United States Secret Service, Coopers & Lybrand, AT&T, HealthCare Partners Medical Group, the towns of Suffield, CT, Shaker Heights, and Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Harvard Hillel, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Association of Union Constructors. In each case, efforts were focused on a reformation of strategic vision at the most senior levels, a redefinition of how work is done, and the integration of a wide range of human resource and education functions to produce a highly effective environment based on trust and honesty. Significant training interventions include the design and delivery of the core leadership curriculum course offered to AT&T managers nationwide, and the design and delivery of the leadership development program for the top 600 managers of Squibb Corporation worldwide. Additional clients have included Nestle USA, General Electric, the National Education Association, the New Museum, Anderson Consulting, AIPAC, Fidelity Investments, The American Medical Group Association, Motorola, and NBC, among others.

Drew also serves as head of the leadership track for the Educational Policy Fellowship Program of the Institute for Educational Leadership. Before founding The Performance Group, he was the Deputy Director at the Office of Dissemination and Professional Development for Office of Educational Research and Improvement at the United States Department of Education. Drew has a PhD from Syracuse University's College of Education in Organizational Research, a Masters in Early Childhood Education from Case-Western Reserve University, and a Bachelors in Political Science from Lake Forest College.

- ❖ **Jill C. Morrison** ([jmorrison@nwlc.org](mailto:jmorrison@nwlc.org)) is Senior Counsel in Health and Reproductive Rights at the National Women's Law Center. Since joining the Center in 1998 as a Georgetown Women's Law and Public Policy Fellow, her focus has been on religious restrictions on reproductive health services. Jill is a graduate of Rutgers University and Yale Law School, where she was an editor of the Yale Journal of Law and Feminism and president of the Black Law Students' Association. She served as a judicial clerk to the Honorable Sterling Johnson Jr., Eastern District, New York. Jill also practiced in Philadelphia as a Bar Foundation Fellow with the Women's Law Project, and as an associate with Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll. Jill currently serves on the board of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and teaches Reproductive Justice at the University of the District of Columbia Law School.
- ❖ **Thao Nguyen** ([tnguyen@nwlc.org](mailto:tnguyen@nwlc.org)) is the Senior Outreach Manager focusing on health care, reproductive rights, judicial nominations, and the Progressive Leadership and Advocacy Network (PLAN). Previously, Thao managed the policy and advocacy work for a women's HIV/AIDS organization, as well as an environmental organization. In addition, she spent two years teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in rural Japan. She received her undergraduate degree in English Literature from the University of California, Irvine and a Masters in Human Rights Law from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Thao spends her free time espousing

the marvels of eBay and stressing out about making her yoga classes on time.

- ❖ **Melanie Ross Levin** ([mrosslevin@nwlc.org](mailto:mrosslevin@nwlc.org)) is currently serving as the Senior Outreach Manager focusing on education, employment, and family economic security issues. Prior to joining the Center, Melanie served as the Field Director for the 2006 campaign of Senator Thomas Carper, D-Del.; worked in the Delaware State Legislature; and consulted in Delaware for Vision 2015, an education reform initiative. She also conducted grassroots organizing around judicial nominations for Planned Parenthood of Delaware. Melanie received her master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Delaware and her bachelor's degree in Political Science and Women's Studies from the University of Delaware.
- ❖ **Val Vilott** ([vvilott@nwlc.org](mailto:vvilott@nwlc.org)) is the Outreach Associate for Family Economic Security, Education and Employment at the National Women's Law Center. Prior to joining the Center, Val spent many hours digging up friendly feminists in the Midwest and the South as a National Campus Organizer at the Feminist Majority Foundation. Val graduated with honors from the George Washington University in 2008 with a degree in International Affairs and Women's Studies. While in college, she held internships with the Center for Health and Gender Equity and the Institute for Women's Policy Research. Outside of the office, Val enjoys volunteering, local activism, baking, and sharing factoids about her home state of Oklahoma (home of the shopping cart and parking meter).
- ❖ **Julie Vogtman** ([jvogtman@nwlc.org](mailto:jvogtman@nwlc.org)) is Senior Counsel for the Family Economic Security Program at the National Women's Law Center. She works on a range of issues involving economic support for low-income women and their families, including child support, unemployment benefits, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Prior to joining the Center, Ms. Vogtman was an associate with Covington & Burling LLP in Washington, DC. She is a graduate of Furman University and Georgetown University Law Center.