

## Press Advisory

**Date:** January 25, 2021

**Subject:** Columbia Law School Center for Gender and Sexuality Law Launches New ERA Project

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**New York, New York** – Columbia Law School Professor [Katherine Franke](#) announced the creation of a new project that will bring cutting-edge research, strategy, and legal resources to the fight for gender-based equality. The [Equal Rights Amendment \(ERA\) Project](#) will be housed at the Law School’s [Center for Gender and Sexuality Law](#) (CGSL), which Franke founded in 2004.

The ERA Project, a law and policy think tank, will develop rigorous academic research, policy papers, expert guidance, and strategic leadership to support the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution, and the broader project of advancing gender-based justice.

“Columbia Law School is well known as the preeminent law school for the study of and specialization in the law of gender and sexuality,” said Franke. “Given that the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice [Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#) ’59 had strong ties to Columbia Law School, as both an alumna and former professor, we are so honored to create the first and only academic home for ERA-related work at Columbia Law School,” Franke continued.

“We have drawn an incredibly impressive group of leaders from law, business, politics, and social justice fields to the project’s advisory board,” said [Liz Young](#), a founding member of the [ERA Project’s Advisory Board](#). “We expect that the ERA will move forward in these hopeful times and inspire equality in all areas of society, and the advisory board envisions truly transformative strategic leadership from the collaboration with Columbia’s Center for Gender and Sexuality Law.”

Gillian Lester, Dean of Columbia Law School, applauded the launch of the new ERA Project, “I am delighted that we can bring the extraordinary legal and strategic expertise at Columbia Law School to the campaign to secure sex-based justice. The ERA Project will solidify Ruth Bader

Ginsburg’s legacy at Columbia Law School, where she taught the law school’s first Sex Discrimination Law courses and trained future women’s rights advocates.”

The ERA Project has begun a search for a Project Director who will work closely with Franke, the Project’s faculty director. The announcement for the new job can be found [here](#).

The ERA Project will not engage in lobbying, but instead will develop academic, legal, and policy expertise to support efforts to expand protections for gender-based equality and justice.

Founding board of advisors include:

**Susan Bevan** retired from a career as legal counsel for a Wall Street firm and has since served as an advocate for women in a variety of endeavors. As co-chair of the Republican Majority for Choice, she worked to protect reproductive health rights for all Americans. Formerly a board member of Alpha Phi International Fraternity and Foundation, her focus remains on developing leadership opportunities for collegiate women. Susan has co-produced two independent films with strong female protagonists, *Equity* and *An Acceptable Loss*.

**Nia J.C. Castelly** is a graduate of Spelman College and Columbia Law School ‘00, and currently serves as senior counsel at Google where she leads a team focused on user privacy rights. Nia participates in and supports the efforts of a number of employee resource groups, including the Civil Rights Group, Black Googlers Network and Women@. Throughout her career, Nia has both founded and led initiatives that help ensure women and minorities not only have access to the law but also can thrive in the practice of law.

**Wade Leak** is a graduate of Columbia Law School ‘89 and Deputy General Counsel at Sony Music Entertainment. He is the vice president of the Columbia Law School Alumni Association and credits the school with awakening his commitment to pursuing equality for all. He supports many organizations that promote social justice and equal rights.

**Marianne Stack** is a former Communications Director for the ERA Coalition. She is a political activist who has helped elect women candidates running for national, state, and local office. Marianne previously worked for ABC News for 16 years where she won two national news Emmy awards and produced many stories on women’s issues.

**Candy Straight** is a political activist, retired investment banker, and film financier. Candy co-produced *Ain’t I A Woman*, a documentary on the ERA premiering later this year, and executive produced *Equity*, a film about women on Wall Street which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2016. *Equity* was purchased by Sony Pictures Classic.

**Marcy Syms** grew Syms Corp, becoming the youngest woman president of a NYSE company. She is founding trustee and president of the Sy Syms Foundation and is often involved with philanthropic startups. She has chaired the ERA Coalition and The Fund for Women’s Equality. She is an author and independent board member and has been recognized for her work in the area of women’s rights with honors of distinction.

**Liz Young** co-founded the ERA Coalition / Fund for Women’s Equality. She has spent two decades fighting for equality and women’s rights. She helped build Equality Now to create enduring equality for women and girls through the use of the law and grassroots work. As a board member at Donor Direct Action, she took advantage of her business background to help create funds for front line women's rights activists around the world. Liz is a former EVP and global head of Communications at Bertelsmann and Sony.

[Visit the ERA Project’s website here.](#)

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The [Center for Gender and Sexuality Law](#) at Columbia Law School develops research projects and initiatives focused on issues of gender, sexuality, reproductive rights, bodily autonomy, and gender identity and expression in law, policy, and professional practice. The Center’s mission is to formulate new approaches to complex issues facing gender and sexual justice movements.