

# Lara Hope Schwartz

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[www.rentlarasbrain.com](http://www.rentlarasbrain.com)

*Attorney, strategist, [author](#), manager, and educator with 20+ years' experience advising organizations and people on policy, communications, and law. Specializing in LGBTQ+ equality, disability rights, access to justice, free speech, dialogue across difference.*

## Experience

### Advocacy, communications, and productive discourse

#### Lara Schwartz Consulting (Current)

2014-

Advise organizations on legal and policy matters including civil rights, public health, executive branch lobbying, and intergroup dialogue. Develop successful foundation grant proposals. Lead workshops on dialogue across difference, inclusive pedagogy, student activism, and free speech. Advise schools, universities, and other institutions on how to foster constructive dialogue. Appear as keynote speaker. Design curricula. Provide professional development services. Select projects and media appearances at [www.rentlarasbrain.com](http://www.rentlarasbrain.com)

#### Project on Civil Discourse at American University (Current)

*Founder and Director, 2018-*

Founded the [Project on Civil Discourse](#), which supports students in developing their skills as listeners and communicators and opening their minds to diverse perspectives. Host events on free speech, diversity and equity, and communication. Train and supervise student leaders in exploring dialogue across difference.

#### American Constitution Society for Law and Policy

*Director of Strategic Engagement, 2013-14*

Led judicial nominations advocacy. Advised candidates on nomination process. Coordinated campaigns on access to justice, judicial nominations, and constitutional interpretation. supported organization president and communications staff with press outreach and statements.

#### Media Matters for America

*Senior Counsel, Courts Matter Director, 2013*

Identified and corrected inaccurate reporting on the courts, civil justice, constitutional law, and other legal issues. Conducted outreach to civil rights groups, media, and consumer protection organizations. [Blog archive](#).

#### American Association of People with Disabilities

*Vice President of External Affairs, 2011-12*

Led communications, messaging, online outreach, lobbying, and media strategy for nation's largest cross-disability civil rights organization. Created messaging strategy for organization and its spokespeople. Created PSA that earned \$3 million in-kind donation of airtime. Drafted executive-branch policy recommendations. Cultivated connections with press. Served as organization spokesperson.

#### Thoughts, Words, and Plans

*Writer and strategist, 2009-11*

Drafted op-eds, speeches, press releases, and other public writings for organization principals, philanthropists, and others. Created strategic plans, reports, advocacy documents, and marketing materials for civil rights organizations.

#### Human Rights Campaign

*Legal Director, 2006-09*

*Chief Legislative Counsel, 2005-06*

*Senior Counsel, 2002-05*

Led legal department in nation's largest civil rights organization advocating for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community. Drafted advocacy documents, speeches, op-eds, testimony, messaging, and press releases. Led team that created executive-branch policy recommendations. Created educational campaigns. Developed legislation on tax and benefits. Appeared in major media outlets as organization spokesperson. Advocated for hate crimes legislation, judicial appointments, employment nondiscrimination, defeat of Federal Marriage Amendment, and repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Served as interim general counsel, providing advice on compliance with lobbying, ethics, intellectual property, and other legal matters. Produced educational materials and curriculum on the importance of the judiciary for LGBT equality.

## Teaching

### American University School of Public Affairs (current)

*Professorial Lecturer, 2014-*

Teach courses on constitutional law, communications, civil rights, political strategy, and policy informed by my experience as an advocate. *Distinguished teaching by SPA term faculty member, 2015-2016.*

## Legal practice

### Gilbert, Heintz, & Randolph LLP

*Associate, 2001-02*

Litigation and complex dispute resolution regarding legislative redistricting and multi-party insurance coverage.

### Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom LLP

*Associate, 1999-00*

Defended corporations, officers, and directors in SEC investigations. Represented clients in rulemaking proceedings. Represented high school student in Americans with Disabilities Act matter.

### Honorable Ronald Lee Gilman, U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit

*Judicial Clerk, 1998-99*

Researched legal issues. Drafted bench memoranda and judicial opinions.

## Education

### Harvard Law School

*J.D. cum laude, 1998*

Co-editor-in-chief, *Harvard Negotiation Law Review*

Family and community mediator

### Brown University

*A.B. magna cum laude, 1993*

Commencement Speaker

## Fellowship

### University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, 2019-20

Project title: "[Let Freedom \(and Respect\) Ring: Fostering Civil Discourse and Free Speech in the Classroom and Beyond.](#)"

## Selected Publications

[How to College: What to Know Before You Go \(And When You're There\).](#) (with Andrea Malkin Brenner) St. Martin's Press (2019)

[Advocates of Dignity Can do Better than Death](#)