



## Laura Wolf, Gary McPherson Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year

BY HALEY HEMEN

While each of us has been riding out the pandemic in our own way, Laura Wolf has been making big moves. She opened the doors of her own law practice, Spark Justice Law LLC (formerly known as Wolf Guevara LLC), in May 2020, although for Wolf those doors have been largely metaphorical: “Starting a business during the pandemic was a terrifying prospect for me, but it ended up working out really well. If anything, I saved money on office space, networking events, and personal outings, leaving more for me to invest in the firm.” She says clients have been more than happy to meet over Zoom, and she has been able to use

online services for day-to-day operations like phone, fax, and e-signature services. “Seeing so much community support for my work by way of personal referrals gave me the confidence to start the firm, even during the pandemic. I have been incredibly fortunate in that I haven’t run into any COVID-related barriers that have impacted my ability to launch the practice I envisioned.”

### Civil Rights Practice

Wolf had previously been a partner at Rathod Mohamedbhai LLC, where she advocated for individuals suffering abuses of their civil rights. “After having found my feet in that role, I felt

like I needed a new challenge—and trust me, the administrative side of running a business is definitely a challenge.” Although she had spent several years managing cases fairly independently at her prior firm, Wolf “felt the urge to put myself out there without a safety net to find out what I was capable of and to see whether I could build a successful firm like so many others I admire have done.”

At Spark Justice Law LLC, Wolf takes on all types of civil rights cases on behalf of individuals. The cases range from sexual assault in school and commercial settings to employment and housing discrimination to police abuse, and more. She also works one-on-one with victims and trauma survivors through school and criminal processes to ensure their rights under Title IX and the Victim Rights Act are being upheld.

Since starting her own firm, Wolf finds that she can take on a broader array of civil rights and victim’s rights cases. She relishes the opportunity to offer services in ways that were not always possible in her previous practice. “We would every now and then take on a limited scope or hourly case at my old firm, but it’s not something that we did regularly like I do in my current practice. I have a lot more flexibility to work on smaller matters, and I have complete freedom to offer hourly work and pro or low bono representation,” Wolf says. “This means I can work with a victim through just the criminal process if that’s all they need, or through the Title IX administrative process at their college or K12 school. And I can offer to represent someone in an unemployment appeal hearing, regardless of whether they have a larger discrimination case to explore. While the bread-and-butter of my work is larger contingent-fee cases, I love being able to offer these forms of representation to people in need.”

### Discovering Her Superpower

That Wolf would be excited to be able to help in new ways makes sense. “I am a 1 on the Enneagram scale, which is the Reformer. If you look it up, it explains a lot about me,” she says. Wolf recalls being the nerdy kid in school who was, nevertheless, always chosen by her classmates as their spokesperson. “I despised



Laura with Sen. Julie Gonzales and the team that drafted and testified in support of SB 20-224, a bill that Gov. Polis signed in June 2020 prohibiting discrimination in housing on the basis of immigration status. Julie was a major supporter of the bill, and Laura was the primary drafter and “expert” witness.

the phrase ‘the world isn’t fair,’ and I would openly reject that sentiment anytime I heard it.”

One of Wolf’s formative experiences came when she pushed back against her non-egalitarian shul to allow girls to hold their Bat Mitzvahs on Saturdays, the same as the boys. “I assumed only I cared about this, given that no other student or their parents had ever questioned the policy. Yet, once I was able to have my Bat Mitzvah on a Saturday, all of the girls wanted the same. That’s when I realized that while I felt incredibly comfortable advocating for myself and others—if not compelled to do so—my peers were different. Being confident in my advocacy almost became a superpower for me, and I felt like it was my duty to use that superpower to stand up for others in my community.”

Before striking out on her own, Wolf had also founded Spark Justice Careers LLC, an organization that aims to mentor young lawyers seeking a career in civil rights law. “We are warned throughout law school that thinking you can land a private-sector civil rights job after graduating is like believing in unicorns,” Wolf

says. Spark Justice Careers is her opportunity to help combat that “completely bogus notion” young law students are “scared into believing.” Wolf’s goal is to ensure that people who want to explore a career in civil rights are able to do so from a place of self-awareness and confidence, never from a place of fear.

### **Coach and Consultant**

And has COVID affected traffic to Spark Justice Careers? “I have definitely seen an uptick in calls for coaching services since the pandemic began, but I don’t know if that’s related to the pandemic or simply that our articles are starting to show up on Google searches. Perhaps a bit of both,” Wolf muses.

She recalls one of her most memorable coaching experiences, where she had the chance to “help a client with a unique need: she had no shortage of job offers but was not sure which to accept. Helping her ascertain what she truly wanted by effectively listening to and trusting her instincts was incredibly meaningful to me. I’d also say that was a big learning opportunity

on my end, since most of the people I engage with are in the opposite boat. They are typically trying to find some job in civil rights, and my work with them becomes a mix of coaching and consulting. However, working with someone in need of purely internal guidance provided me an opportunity to better develop my direct coaching skills.”

This kind of deliberate thoughtfulness suffuses Wolf’s approach to her new practice. “I’d say my ultimate goal is to show that you can be successful in your practice without focusing just on growth. I believe that by staying true to the reasons you entered the profession in the first place, good things will eventually come.” Of course, this approach is not without a dose of nerves, but Wolf counts herself “incredibly lucky to have mentors help me throughout the process.” Early on, Wolf received advice to not take on too many cases all at once out of fear that calls might dry up. “I definitely learned this the hard way, finding myself overcome with work the first few months in. However, I’ve started to try and worry less about when the next call will



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of an Idea  
Lies in the  
Using of it

– Thomas Edison

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**1** Laura with fellow COBALT grads Abby Hinchcliff (center) and Sarah Stout.

**2** Laura, age 5, with her brother Joey and grandpa Louis Shapiro. Wolf credits her grandfather with teaching her the importance of community and connection.

come in, trusting that it will. Doing so has given me more time for myself and the opportunity to reflect on the work already accomplished.”

#### 2021 Goals

And for Wolf, 2021 is shaping up to be no less dynamic. “I have so many goals for the new year, I don’t even know where to begin,” she says. “I am currently working on legislative policy efforts with multiple legal organizations, which will take up quite a bit of my attention for the next six months. I am also looking forward to working with others in enforcing the Enhance Law Enforcement Integrity Act and ensuring ongoing strides are being made to end police violence against our communities, especially our BIPOC communities. Finally, I hope to expand Spark Justice beyond legal representation and coaching services. I envision one day offering consulting and policy work under the Spark Justice brand to further broaden civil rights efforts within our legal community. And, of course, I am incredibly hopeful that the law firm will continue to see success through 2021. I must say, our success to date has been entirely



reliant upon and a product of the support we have received from the broader Colorado legal community. I am deeply fortunate and grateful that our colleagues trust us to provide top quality legal services to those referred our way.”

#### Outstanding Young Lawyer

When she found out she had been recognized with the Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year Award, Wolf found herself “incredibly honored and surprised.” Anyone who knows her would likely not share that surprise. The award is named in honor of Colorado State Representative Gary McPherson, who was a devoted public servant and an active member of the legal community, and Wolf is a worthy exemplar of the young professional in this mold. **CL**