

*LWI Lives* is a regular electronic publication of the “Faces of LWI” Committee, which explores and communicates the emerging identity of LWI and its members. We have in common the commitment to being the best legal writing professors that we can be. But we are multi-dimensional people with different strengths, interests, curiosities, and gifts. By profiling individuals in our community, we hope to expand and develop our understanding of who we are and what we aspire to be.

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## Maureen Johnson: Justice for Chica

By Cindy Archer



Maureen Johnson grew up in the San Francisco Bay area and, like many other children, dreamed of having a dog for a pet and companion. Like many other wise parents, Maureen’s parents decided that would be a dream deferred.

So, later in life when Maureen and her partner signed a lease for a new home in the hills in Topanga Canyon, it included the following handwritten term, “Tenants may have a dog, with landlord’s approval.”

One day, when Maureen was in the yard playing her guitar, *she* arrived, nuzzling her head and paws under the fence—“Chica.”

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## Wendy Shea: Boxing and Emboldening in Baton Rouge

By Jody Marcucci



Wendy Shea, an Associate Professor of Legal Analysis and Writing at Southern University Law Center, grew up in the Midwest. She attended college in North Dakota and law school in Indiana. As an attorney, she served as a law clerk at the Illinois Appellate Court. And she taught legal writing as an adjunct professor at Loyola University School of Law and DePaul University College of Law, both in Chicago, Illinois. So when she decided to focus her career on teaching full time, it only made sense that she ended up where she did. In the South. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Wendy, always one to put her best foot forward, embraced this geographical change. She has called Baton Rouge her home since she joined the Law Center faculty in 2008. She has found a

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### Contributors to this edition:

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## Maureen Johnson (continued from page 1)

Maureen likes to remember the encounter as Chica having been drawn to the sound of the music, not the treats Maureen offered. After some days of investigation, Maureen learned Chica's owner was a neighbor who could no longer keep her. Chica now had a new family, and Maureen's dream had become a reality.

Enter the nightmare.

Maureen's landlord owned three rentals, including Maureen's, which sat on an acre of land. The landlord evicted the tenants in the middle house and moved in with her own dog. She then demanded Chica be sent packing. That wasn't going to happen. Maureen, who was a bartender at the time, headed to the Malibu public library to do some legal research and writing. Within a few days, she had a solid draft that ultimately forced the landlord to back down.

Her love for writing had met her passion for justice, and the rest is herstory . . . .

After years as an artist seeing friends and colleagues in the entertainment industry struggle to assert their rights, and inspired by her victory for Chica, Maureen decided to attend law school. Her love of the written word and strong work ethic brought her much success and many accolades. When she graduated from Loyola Law School in 1996, she was ranked in the top 3% of her class and was a member of the Order of the Coif. She was also a highly honored member of the national moot court team and on the staff of the Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Review.

For Maureen it was always about the writing. She had loved the written word since she was a child. An avid reader and writer, she wrote the family newsletter even though its circulation was limited—to an audience of three. After college, she was a songwriter and member of an all-female rock band. Even after law school, she continued to hone her writing skills, earning an MFA in 2009 from the prestigious UCLA School of Film and Television with a focus in screenwriting.

Without a doubt, Maureen's favorite aspect of practicing law was her ability to use her writing gift to provide justice for her clients. She became an expert in drafting briefs in high-stakes matters and then helped others in her firms develop their writing skills. Working at Mayer Brown, and ultimately Kaye Scholer, LLP, she did not always get to represent clients on issues that she was personally passionate about, so she took on pro bono matters representing clients referred by The Alliance for Children's Rights, LAMBDA Legal Aid and Defense Fund, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and Public



Chica

Counsel Law Center.

While mentoring younger associates, a new passion awakened in Maureen—teaching. She first returned to her alma mater as an adjunct, teaching a litigation drafting course for ten years before joining the faculty full-time in the Lawyering Skills program. Not only did teaching allow her to share her passion for writing with young, budding professionals, but it gave her a platform from which to continue to write about things she was passionate about: writing and social justice.

Maureen's colleagues would likely agree that one of the things that distinguishes her class is her emphasis on persuasive writing as a tool for advocacy and justice. She even coined her own mnemonic, PREAC, for persuasive writing, where the P stands for "position." She teaches her students to advocate for their client's position—not "your" conclusion, but a legal conclusion grounded and contextualized in the client's position. As reflected in Maureen's scholarship, the thought and care taken in drafting the introduction to a client's position is paramount; it is crucial to the context for the rest of the argument. One of the things that Maureen is most proud about is how she has not only been able to drive that point home in the classroom but also in her scholarship.

She is a prolific and dedicated scholar. Of her many articles, she has two favorites. First, her "You Had Me at Hello" article prompted Scotusblog.com to ask her to contribute a

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## Maureen Johnson (continued from page 2)

short “Legal scholarship highlight,” which summarized the article for Scotusblog readers. Second, her recent “Separate but (Un)Equal” article looked at the social and legal rhetoric at the time of the *Plessy* opinion and in the three subsequent resurgences of white nationalist rhetoric in the United States in the 1920s, in the 1950s to 1960s (at the time of *Brown v. Board of Education*), and in the present day. Her next project is tentatively entitled: *Letting Go of ~~White~~ Privilege: The Legal and Rhetorical Path to Equality and Equity for All* (strikethrough intentional).

Maureen also expressed how important LWI has been to her as a professional family. “I really appreciate all of the help on scholarship from LWI and the many individuals I consider mentors. This includes the LWI Writer’s Workshop, the Washburn Junior Scholars Workshop, and, of course, the West Coast Rhetoric folks.” She was humbled to be honored at AALS this year as part of the LWR Section’s “Newer Scholars Showcase.”

Maureen does not limit her advocacy to teaching and scholarship. In 2017, she launched #EQ4ALL@LLS, which tells the stories of individuals committed to equality and equity for all. She explained, “The focus is on starting conversations as to why we all need to have each other’s back, meaning everyone needs to do more than just look out for one’s own group; everyone needs to stand up for all other oppressed minorities.” Her hope over time is to start a “Storytelling for Social Justice Initiative” to encourage other schools to promote similar projects.

It is no surprise that Maureen’s favorites activities in her downtime are shared with a fur-ever friend, her Goldendoo-



Bernie

dle, Bernie. They walk every day and particularly enjoy running into neighbors (both human and four-pawed). They also enjoy quick games of catch using a football; Bernie’s quite the wide receiver. Of course it’s a football as Maureen is an avid LA Rams fan. She loves the “story” of the return of “our Rams” and their incredible comeback between the first season after returning to LA and the next season, which took them to the playoffs. A year later, it was an invitation to the Superbowl. Ever the justice advocate, she was particularly proud of quarterback Jarod Goff’s anti-bullying Twitter post.

When asked about her family, she replied, “I’m an only child, with only two relatives in SoCal, but I consider myself blessed to be part of a much broader community and family. Maybe that is another reason why I wanted to start #EQ4ALL. We really are all one. Realizing and embracing our common sense of humanity can unite us, not only as a nation, but as a world. Good people from all parts of the globe prioritizing love. That reminds me of the golden rule Sister Mary Virginia kept emphasizing in third-grade: ‘Love and treat your neighbor as you wish they would love and treat you.’”

### Author’s note:

I have known Maureen for eight years. I don’t often sit with colleagues to ask them what makes them tick. Interviewing her for LWI Lives was a treat. (In fact, opportunities like this are the reason I volunteered for the LWI Lives committee.)

I asked Maureen to name three adjectives that describe herself. She said, “(1) Energizer Bunny,” which she immediately noted is “really two words, but it was the first thought that popped into my head; (2) empathetic; and (3) creative thinker.” I could not agree more. An energizer bunny is not just someone who is continually busy but instead someone who has a seemingly limitless internal energy focused on creating continuous impact using a singular musical instrument. That is Maureen. Maureen has been able to accomplish so much, energized by her sense of justice and using her musical instrument—her writing tool. And Maureen’s empathy is often expressed through her creative gifts as in her #EQ4ALL blog. I and others are so blessed to be the beneficiaries of the results of her labor.

And to think it began with justice for a dog named Chica.

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## Wendy Shea (continued from page 1)

strong community in Baton Rouge, mostly through a women's gym she is quite active with. Wendy enjoys all kinds of fitness activities, including Pilates and swimming.

Her favorite activity of late is boxing. With gloves. And pads. And bags. "It's a great stress reliever," she tells me. "And it's empowering." She enjoys the community of her boxing class, which consists of women whose ages range from twenties through seventies. She attends class at least twice a week, including on Monday mornings. This class helps her focus and prepare for the work week ahead.

Wendy has also thrown her hat into the ring academically at the Law Center. In addition to teaching legal writing, Wendy has successfully undertaken several projects to empower students of all backgrounds. For example, Wendy developed a Common Law Bar Prep Program for Law Center students, who are mostly familiar with Louisiana's Civil Law model. She also runs the Law Center's "Fresh Start Program," which assists students who are returning to law school after experiencing an unsuccessful first attempt. She helps these students understand what may have gone wrong in their first try, and she helps them develop a plan to stay off the ropes during their second attempt.

In recognition of Wendy's many accomplishments, the Law Center recently changed Wendy's status (and the status of two legal writing colleagues) to tenure. She has also been named the Judge Freddie Pitcher Jr. endowed professor.

But the project of which Wendy is "most proud" is the Baton Rouge Bar Association's Junior Partners Academy. This program, with which Wendy has been involved for eight years, seeks to educate public school students in civics education. The program sends an attorney into the classroom



Left, Wendy and her nephew enter a cupcake competition with Krampus and Elf spaghetti cupcakes. Wendy reports that, "not surprisingly, we did not win."



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Above, Wendy (as Chewbacca) and SULC's SBA sponsor a Star Wars themed "Truck or Treat" stop at the Baton Rouge Children's Hospital. Below, *Goldilocks v. The Three Bears*.



about once a month to introduce students, some as young as second grade, to the legal system and to enhance the students' critical thinking and public speaking skills. The students engage in activities like "fairy tale trials," such as *Goldilocks v. The Three Bears*, and contract negotiations. Wendy has received hundreds of letters from program participants and parents throughout the years documenting the difference the program has made in many children's lives.

One thing about Baton Rouge that Wendy has not embraced is its knock-out humidity. With summer approaching, Wendy will throw in the towel on the South and escape back to the Midwest. "The Midwest has humidity," she tells me, "but the humidity in Louisiana is just different." So, she will spend the summer visiting family and friends in familiar places like Iowa and Minnesota. But come fall, this Midwesterner will once again return to the South, ready to get back into the ring and hit the books.

You can contact Wendy Shea at [wshea@sulc.edu](mailto:wshea@sulc.edu).

## UPCOMING LEGAL WRITING EVENTS

**Teaching Today's Law Students**  
Institute for Law  
Teaching and Learning  
Washburn University  
June 3-5, 2019

**2019 Biennial Applied  
Legal Storytelling**  
University of Colorado  
July 9-11, 2019

**Promoting Diversity in Law  
School Leadership Workshop**  
Villanova Law School  
August 12-13, 2019

**Central States Legal Writing Conf.**  
Chicago, IL  
September 12-19, 2019

**Global Legal Skills Conference**  
Arizona State University  
December 12-14, 2019

**2020 AALS Annual Meeting**  
Washington, D.C.  
January 2-5, 2020

**Conference on Writing  
and Well-Being**  
University of Arizona  
January 9-12, 2020

**20th Biennial Conference,  
Rhetoric Society of America**  
May 21-24, 2020

**2020 LWI Biennial Conference**  
Georgetown University  
July 15-18, 2020

Check out these websites for more  
information on what's happening!

<http://www.lwionline.org/>  
<http://www.alwd.org/>  
<http://www.aals.org/aals-events/>

## The December Issue: Pro Bono / Social Justice

Are you actively engaged in pro bono work or in social justice efforts? Do you know of a legal writing colleague who is?

If so, we'd like to hear about it! The December issue of LWI Lives will focus on colleagues who are deeply involved in pro bono or social justice work. If you are such a person or if you know of such a person, please contact Joan Rocklin ([jrocklin@uoregon.edu](mailto:jrocklin@uoregon.edu)) and provide just a brief description of your or your colleague's work.

We look forward to hearing from you.

## LWI Lives Selection Process

The Committee is organized into three teams, and each team is responsible for selecting, proposing, and writing the three profiles in each issue. To ensure a diverse newsletter, teams propose individual names to the Co-Chairs, and the Co-Chairs review the suggestions to ensure a wide range of coverage over time.

If you have someone in mind who we should interview in a future newsletter, please feel free to email any of the committee members listed below. If you could include a note explaining why you think the individual's profile would be particularly interesting, it will help us in developing priorities.

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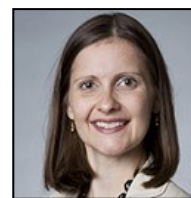
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