

PEOPLE



Sara E. Solfanelli
*Special Counsel for Pro
Bono Initiatives*

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Oversees the firm's robust pro bono program. Leverages the firm's resources to represent indigent individuals seeking justice, bring impact litigation for a more just and fair society, and develop strategic partnerships with international, national and local nonprofit organizations to enable them to better achieve their missions.

Under Sara's leadership, an incredible 70% of Schulte's lawyers, along with dozens of business staff, participated in pro bono in 2022.

Sara harnesses the skills and unwavering passion of Schulte's lawyers and business staff to drive impactful and rewarding pro bono opportunities that help underserved and marginalized individuals and communities access justice and strengthen the organizations that serve them.

With her guidance, Schulte serves as outside general counsel to mission-driven organizations, including renowned global organizations such as Partners in Health, Innocence Project and Girls Who Code, and preeminent New York City nonprofits such as Sanctuary for Families, Figure Skating in Harlem, Futures Ignite and New York Civil Liberties Union. Most recently, Sara spearheaded partnerships with Dress for Success, Pregnancy Justice, SAGE and Too Young to Wed, and impact litigation with Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Sara works closely with Justice for Greenwood to seek justice for the survivors and descendants of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and she is part of the Schulte Tulsa Race Massacre Litigation Team that brought the groundbreaking lawsuit *Randle v. City of Tulsa et. al*, which has had precedent-setting wins and has garnered significant national attention in the press.

In the wake of the US Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs*, Sara worked with Pregnancy Justice and a large Schulte team of lawyers and business staff to create a multidisciplinary guide, *Confronting Pregnancy Criminalization*. She also has extensive experience advising nonprofits at every stage, from start-ups to ongoing operations.

Before law school, Sara was a director at Women's Campaign International (WCI), where she developed an undergraduate course at University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School focused on WCI's work to empower women in emerging democracies. After law school, she clerked for the first woman justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court. She practiced law in Boston before joining Schulte as an associate in the Employment & Employee Benefits Group in 2007.

From 2011 to 2017, Sara served as a global HR director for media and advertising agencies, as well as SVP, Counsel for the Americas, at WPP Group, the world's largest marketing communications network.

In 2017, Sara transitioned to public service full-time and joined the Urban Justice Center as Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel, where she helped launch the Social Justice Accelerator, which incubates start-up and early-stage nonprofits.

Sara's passion to protect the rights of the underserved has guided her career. She helped start and has been instrumental in the success of

Foundation Rwanda, which has funded the education of more than 830 children born from sexual assaults during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. She is also on the board of Stand Up! Girls and Community Resource Exchange and volunteers her time to mentor the next generation of advocates and change-makers.

Practices

PRO BONO

NONPROFIT

Bar Admissions

New York

Massachusetts

Education

The George Washington University Law School, J.D.,
with honors

- Member, *The George Washington University Law School International Law Review*

College of William & Mary, B.A.

Publications

- “Tulsa Race Massacre Survivors Clear Legal Hurdle to Land in State Supreme Court,” *Bloomberg*, Aug. 16, 2023 (quoted)
- “‘This isn’t over’: Demand for national reparations intensifies after dismissal of Tulsa lawsuit,” *Yahoo! News*, July 11, 2023 (quoted)
- “‘We will not go quietly’: Tulsa race massacre survivors vow appeal after years-in-the-making lawsuit dismissed,” *The Independent*, July 10, 2023 (quoted)
- “Judge rejects Tulsa Race Massacre survivors’ reparations claim,” *ABA Journal*, July 10, 2023 (quoted)
- “Survivors plan appeal after Tulsa Race Massacre lawsuit dismissed,” *Tulsa World*, July 10, 2023 (quoted)
- “Judge throws out lawsuit for reparations over 1921 Tulsa race massacre,” *The Washington Post*, July 9, 2023 (quoted)
- “Tulsa race massacre survivors are fighting for justice 102 years after catastrophic attack,” *The Independent*, May 31, 2023 (quoted)
- “Tulsa Reckoning,” *ABA Journal*, October/November 2022 (quoted)
- “‘We Survived’: Tulsa Race Massacre Survivors Celebrate Latest Ruling,” *Yahoo! News*, May 10, 2022 (quoted)
- “Survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Vow to Stay Alive ‘Until They Get Justice,’” *Yahoo! News*, May 10, 2022 (featured)
- “Tulsa Race Massacre Reparations Lawsuit Survives Motion to Deny and Will Move Forward, Judge Rules,” *CNN*, May 2, 2022 (quoted)
- “Judge Rules that Tulsa Massacre Lawsuit Seeking Reparations Can Proceed,” *Reuters*, May 2, 2022 (featured)

Speaking Engagements

- “Where do we go from here?” Keynote Presentation at Scranton University’s MLK Celebration and Awards Dinner, Jan. 14, 2024
- “Women in Law & Government,” Yale Women’s Leadership Initiative Women’s Empowerment Conference, April 2023
- Guest Lecturer, “Doing Business in the Era of Reckoning: What Does Reckoning Look Like?” Diversity in the Workplace Class, William & Mary, March 2023

Memberships

Community Resource Exchange (Board of Directors, 2021-present)

Foundation Rwanda (Director and Secretary, 2008-present)

Stand Up! Girls (Founding Board Member, 2018-present)

GO Project (Committed Saturday Volunteer Tutor, 2015-present)

Women’s Campaign International (Director of International Programs, 1999-2000)

Prior Experience

- Urban Justice Center
- WPP Group USA, Inc.
- MediaCom Worldwide
- Iris Worldwide
- Schulte Roth & Zabel
- Choate, Hall & Stewart