

Save the Date:
September 30, 2021 at 5 p.m. ET

Lecture:
My Journey to Justice

“This is a moment to recognize and address the harms that harsh, disparate policies that have focused more on punishment than supporting healthy individuals, families and communities have had on the people, particularly those who are Black and low-income.” — Nicole Austin-Hillery



NICOLE AUSTIN-HILLERY

Executive Director of the US Program,
Human Rights Watch

Civil and Human Rights Leader



A 1989 graduate of CMU's Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nicole Austin-Hillery now leads Human Rights Watch's efforts to end violations in abusive systems within the United States.

Before joining [Human Rights Watch](#), she was the first director and counsel of the [Brennan Center's Washington, D.C. office](#), where she oversaw the growth of the Center's advocacy and policy development work and served as its chief representative before the government.

She has held positions with the Washington Bar Association, Washington Council of Lawyers, ABA Standing Committee on Election Law, Board of Common Cause and ABA Criminal Justice Section.

Ms. Austin-Hillery has published numerous pieces for major news outlets, including *The Washington Post*, *Time*, *The Hill*, *CNN.com* and others.

Drug Enforcement and Human Rights

In [her testimony](#) before a U.S. House subcommittee, Ms. Austin-Hillery responds to the interconnected issues of federal drug policy and racial justice by detailing how current policies violate rights to privacy and health.

“The Past is the Present Until We Have Reparations”

In a recent [dispatch](#) and [commentary](#), she urges Congress to pass H.R. 40 to establish a commission to examine how the ongoing impacts of slavery and post-emancipation laws continue to harm Black people and propose realistic reparations.

ABSTRACT

I decided to become a civil and human rights lawyer, not as a career path, but because it was a calling. The journey that led me to my life's work — focused on issues ranging from race discrimination to voting rights and human rights — was shaped by everything from my upbringing in public housing to my walk through the halls of Carnegie Mellon and the foundation and opportunities both provided. This journey manifested itself in a life focused on protecting and expanding rights for those whose voices are often silenced. I want to share the story of my journey and the significant role that Carnegie Mellon played in providing me with not just a place to learn, but a space to discover, challenge and even rebel. What did Carnegie Mellon give me and what did I give it that impacted my journey on a road leading to a privileged position as a civil and human rights leader? More importantly, how does my story speak to the role that individuals and institutions can play in addressing and confronting real questions of race and justice and how we can collectively impact what real justice looks like?