Outstanding Women of International, European and Constitutional Law 2024
Not all men (and especially the wisest) share the opinion that it is bad for women to be educated. But it is very true that many foolish men have claimed this because it displeased them that women knew more than they did.

Christine de Pizan
September 1364

Christine de Pizan was a virtuous and versatile court writer, author and poet. She began writing after her husband’s death to support her three children and mother. Her ingenuity found expression in literary, historical, political and philosophical works, including early feminist writings, such as The Book of the City of Ladies, a description of women’s significant contributions to society. Her work The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry is one of the first known literature dedicated at the law of war, earning her the title “Mother of International Law”.

Author: Verena Kahl
Anna Julia Cooper was born into bondage in North Carolina, USA, in 1858. She was the fourth African American woman to obtain a doctorate degree and went on to become an author, teacher, and activist. Her book A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South is known to be one of the first articulations of Black feminism, demonstrating the complex intersection between gender, race, and class.

Let our girls know that we expect something more of them than that they merely look pretty and appear well in society. Not the boys less but the girls more.

Author: Julia Clara Lips

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Louise Weiss
25 January 1893

Witnessing the horrors of WWI, Louise Weiss set out to make war on war by becoming a journalist focusing on international affairs and the pursuit of peace. She founded La Femme Nouvelle to fight for women’s rights to vote. During WWII, being Jewish herself, she helped to organize a passive civil defense for women against air raids. In 1979, she was elected to the first European Parliament and gave its inaugural speech.

Author: Christian Raby
Bertha Lutz
2 August 1894

Bertha Lutz was a renowned scientist in the field of herpetology – the study of frogs –, a women’s rights activist, a politician at national and a diplomat at international level. She was one of the first women elected to the Brazilian parliament and one of four women to sign the UN Charter. Together with Minerva Bernardino, she is credited with including the word women in the preamble to the Charter and laying the foundation for the Commission on the Status of Women.

Author: Lauritz Wilde

I come more and more to the conclusion that no civilization is possible without women very decisively in public affairs. (Lutz to Williams, March 1, 1938, WP)
At no moment did I consider the persons protected by us as material for calculations and statistics, but always took care of their needs, regarding them as human beings and persecuted persons with the right to all care and attention from our department.

(American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, G45-54, F007R/0841, as cited in Miller, Years of Glory, 2021, 153).

Hélène Cazes Benatar
27 October 1898

Moroccan Jewish lawyer and activist Hélène Cazes Benatar grew up in Tangier and later moved to Casablanca. Already a wife and mother, she obtained her law degree from the University of Bordeaux. Following the outbreak of WWII, she instituted the Committee for Assistance to Foreign Refugees collaborating with aid organizations to provide support for refugees fleeing from Europe to North Africa and continued to work with the Joint Distribution Committee after the war. She eventually resumed her legal profession, first in Casablanca and then Paris, where she passed in 1979.

Author: Franziska Bachmann
Annie Ruth Jiagge
7 October 1918

Jiagge was Ghana’s first female lawyer and the first female judge in Ghana and the Commonwealth of Nations. In 1980, she became the first female president of Ghana’s highest court. As principal drafter of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and co-founder of the organization that became Women’s World Banking, Jiagge was an exceptional force in advancing women’s rights. Her activism included serving the World Council of Churches in the fight against racism and apartheid in South Africa.

Author: Ann-Sophie Hartmann

Injustice eats me internally. I get very restless when I come in touch with it.
As far as the legal, political and social position of women in Germany goes, there have been many well needed improvements. However, the result is still not good (enough). Much remains to be done for future generations of women and men.

Lore Maria Peschel-Gutzeit
26 October 1932

Lore Maria Peschel-Gutzeit worked as a judge, lawyer and Senator of Justice in Hamburg and Berlin. She fought for the introduction of part-time work and family leave for female civil servants, which was passed in 1968 and has been called “Lex Peschel“ ever since. She was also involved in the expansion of Art. 3 para. 2 of the German Constitution, which stipulates that “the state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist.“

Author: Lilian Langer
In 1994, Limbach was the first woman to be appointed president of the German Federal Constitutional Court, serving until 2002. As to make the Court’s voice heard and understood correctly in a world of modern media, she reformed the press strategy and appointed the first press speaker of the Court. Before joining the Court, she was Senator of Justice for the State of Berlin. She fought alongside Lore Maria Peschel-Gutzeit for the reform of Art. 3 para. 2 of the German Constitution.

Author: Friederike Löbbert
Gender equality is an aspect of Rule of Law because Rule of Law is rule of just law. Laws that do not discriminate on grounds of race, religion, gender, caste or any other irrelevant ground. Rule of law entails enforcement of human rights for all human beings so that all can live a life with dignity.

Sujata Vasant Manohar

28 August 1934

Born on 28th August 1934 and educated at Elphinstone, Oxford and Lincoln’s Inn, Sujata Vasant Manohar was the first lady Chief Justice of Bombay and Kerala High Court. From 1994 to 1999, she was appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court of India, where she delivered landmark decisions on women’s rights, including the decision incorporating the provisions of CEDAW into enforceable Indian law. She became a member of the National Human Rights Commission, and in 2021, was awarded the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Medal of Honour.

Author: Kelly Amal Dhru
Yayori Matsui was a Japanese journalist for the newspaper Asahi Shimbun and a feminist activist focusing on sexual violence, sex tourism and the exploitation of sex workers in East Asia. Her work led to the establishment of the Women’s International Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery in 2000, a people’s tribunal created to prosecute crimes committed against the so-called “comfort women”, who were enslaved and raped by the Japanese military in WWII.

My life has been a life of action propelled by outrage and anger against injustice. I have been offered no official or social status of power, and I take that as an honour.

Author: Alena Schröder

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I have faith in a future where there will be a more equitable distribution, and where people will take more pleasure in contributing to a better world than in buying a fur coat or a luxury car they don’t need.

Paula Escarameia
1 June 1960

A mentor and advocate, Paula Escarameia’s legacy extends beyond victories in courtrooms, inspiring the next generation of legal minds. She was a tireless defender of Women’s Human Rights, and her precision, dedication, and unwavering commitment to justice were extraordinary. With a career over decades, she earned global acclaim for her expertise in Public International Law and was also the first woman and the first Portuguese person to join the United Nations International Law Commission in 2002.

Author: Vanessa Domingues
E. Tendayi Achiume
1982

Advocating for international refugee law and addressing the continuing impact of colonialism on migration, Tendayi Achiume became the first female UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Her global work includes being a law professor at UCLA, an associate professor at Pretoria University and a research associate at both the African Centre for Migration and Society and the Oxford Refugee Studies Centre.

Author: Marie Siegemund

We must connect legal and power centers to those living on the front lines of racial subordination, those living the violence of borders. Their knowledge and experiences should be informing the policy that governs their lives.
ABOUT THE PROJECT:
The project “Outstanding Women of International, European and Constitutional Law“ is an initiative of young researchers and students. Their aim is to make distinguished women, and their important contributions to the development of the national and international legal order, visible and more widely known. An amplified monthly version of this calendar will be released in 2024. Please scan the QR-Code for more details:

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01/01 Neujahr
   New Year’s Day
01/05 Tag der Arbeit
   Labour Day
29/03 Karfreitag
   Good Friday
09/05 Christi Himmelfahrt
   Ascension Day
01/04 Ostermontag
   Easter Monday
20/05 Pfingstmontag
   Pentacost
03/10 Tag der Deutschen Einheit
   Day of German Unity
31/10 Reformationstag
   Reformation Day
25/12 - 26/12 1. und 2. Weihnachtsfeiertag
   1st and 2nd Day of Christmas

* public holidays for Hamburg