



Ava Chisling

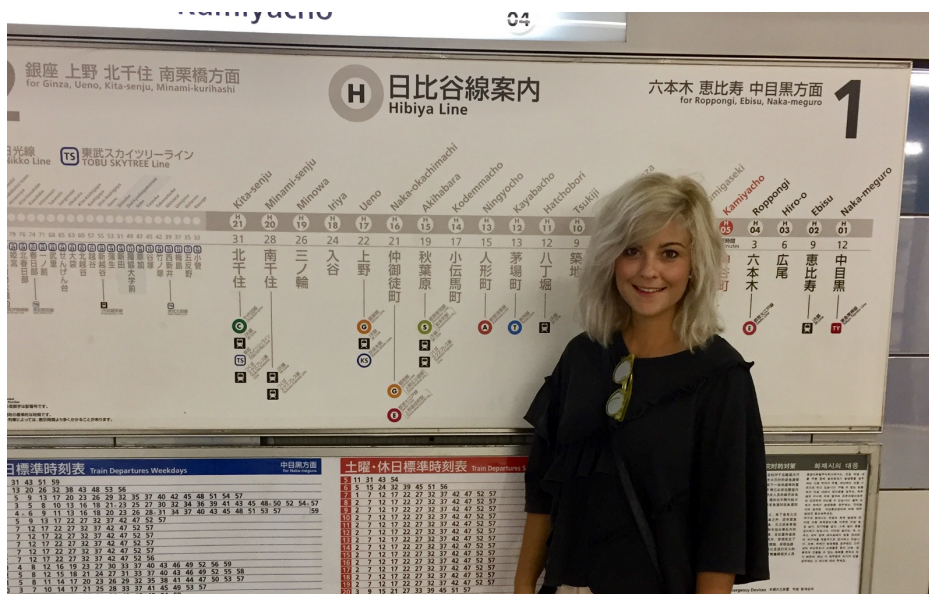
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#LegalTechLives with Erika Pagano, Associate Director of LawWithoutWalls and lecturer in law at the University of Miami

Fluent in Chinese and currently teaching in Miami and Madrid, Erika lives her life in a global manner and makes a strong case for why law firms should follow suit.



Erika in Japan

Erika studies cross-cultural communication and the impact of creativity and technology in the changing legal landscape. She is the Associate Director of **LawWithoutWalls**, an experiential learning exercise in collaborative problem-solving and development for lawyers, professionals, and students across the globe. She is a lecturer in law at the University of Miami (U of M) and guest faculty at IE University in Madrid, Spain. Erika received her B.S.F.S. in Science, Technology, and International Affairs from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and completed coursework at Peking

University and East China Normal University. She received her J.D. from the University of Miami, where she was Managing Editor of Miami Law Review and a James Weldon Johnson/Robert H. Waters Scholar. Erika is also a Miami Trustee for the Awesome Foundation, sits on the National Advisory Council for Law School Transparency, is an active member of the Georgetown University Alumni Admissions Program, and serves as Co-Chair of the Georgetown University Class of 2008 Alumni Committee. She is the proud mom of a Chartreux and Shih Tzu/Pekingese mix, both rescues.

Ava Chisling: You are the Associate Director of LawWithoutWalls (LWOW), an organization that matches students with law and business schools worldwide. Tell me why a global vision is important in law?

Erika Pagano: LWOW was born out of a need for legal education to address skills crucial to success in today's globalized marketplace, like cultural competency, leadership, team building, communication, project management, and more. While traditional substantive legal education is—and will always be—fundamental, true success requires proficiency in the aforementioned skills (what we call 21st Century Professional Skills). As clients and client matters become increasingly complex, lawyers need to be able to understand, empathize with, and service their clients (and their changing needs). In short, LWOW is designed to change the way that current and future lawyers partner together with current and future professionals to solve problems. Given that our problems transcend borders, disciplines, and traditional structures, a way of arriving at this solution necessitates the same multicultural, multidisciplinary attributes—our method mirrors what's actually happening.

AC: What do the mentors get out of the LWOW matching process? And what do the students get out of it?

EP: LWOW provides all participants—including students and mentors—a highly effective, low-risk, real-time environment in which to practice and hone their teaming, cultural competency, presentation, project management, leadership, and communication skills. All parties learn

new technologies, new ways of working, and new skills. For example, a Senior Associate who plays a Team Leader (like a project quarterback) role might have had mentors in her own career; however, through LWOW, she now has a chance to mentor those junior to her. She also has an opportunity to work with team members from institutions, organizations, and cultures different from her own. She'll also have the opportunity to present in front of 200 people—this is something that even many senior lawyers have never done!



Erika's East China Normal University student ID from 2006

AC: Your own life reflects the global vision of LWOW. I know you studied in China. What drew you to Chinese culture and language and what have you learned from your time there?

EP: The journey to China is a little more complicated than a direct flight or logical decision! I grew up in a multicultural, multilingual home, and my family always encouraged travel as a form of education. In high school, I wanted to visit Japan. My father—the consummate dealmaker—said I could go as long as I made it happen independently. So, I researched,

found, and applied for an exchange scholarship funded by the US and Japanese governments—and won! My time in rural northwestern Japan taught me, among other lessons, the reward of taking (calculated, of course!) risks. When I entered the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in 2004, the risk-taking continued.

I chose Chinese as my proficiency language because I thought it might be a challenge, fun, and useful—all of which turned out to be true. Several years of studying and working in China taught me the value of listening, perseverance, grit, and fearlessness. It also inspired a deep interest in the delicate puzzle of cultural competency. These experiences continue to influence my work, especially with LWOW.

AC: What are law schools doing right? And what are they doing wrong?

EP: More than 30 law and business schools from 15 countries and six continents participate in LWOW. This is encouraging evidence of a global trend that law schools are acknowledging and addressing the reality of the changing legal marketplace. Experiential education, like LWOW, that incorporates hands-on, multidisciplinary, and blended (part-virtual) learning with a focus on solving tangible problems, not only gives students unprecedented exposure to a wide range of issues in legal practice, but also broadens students' skillset and understanding of the greater legal landscape (and where they might begin to make a difference).

One of the biggest complaints from employers is that new legal graduates don't understand basic business skills, including cursory email etiquette, giving and receiving feedback up and down, and how to pick up a phone and call someone to get necessary information. LWOW gives our students plenty of practice and prepares them for these and other situations whose survival is not necessarily taught or addressed in law school.

AC: I see that you also develop and bring products to market via LawWithoutWalls. Tell me about the process you use in developing new products.

EP: Over the past eight years, our founder, Michele DeStefano, has developed a 3-phase, 4-month, 5-step process that we use to go from problem to solution. We have taken hundreds of teams through the process, resulting in some really game-changing ideas. Currently, last year's winning Project of Worth, Ithaca, is being brought to life at AO Fuse, Allen & Overy's incubator in London. Ithaca is a non-profit tech platform that helps refugees obtain legal assistance by 1) connecting them with pro bono lawyers based on availability, expertise, and need; and 2) providing a case management system and virtual space for initial consultation.

The goal is to dramatically increase the number of legal advisors available to refugees upon landing in Europe to prevent individuals

dropping out of the asylum application process and reduce the numbers using human traffickers. The platform simultaneously enables lawyers who have a desire to utilize their legal skills for public good, but often aren't able to do so due to the lack of time and resources. Today, the Ithaca team (Joshua Ajamu of Bucerius Law School, James Dong of Sydney Law School, and Joseph May of University College London), along with their sponsor, Janders Dean, are at the Hague pitching Ithaca as finalists for the Innovating Justice Awards. This team (and their mission and their ever-growing list of accomplishments) continues to make us so proud.



With Michele DeStefano, Founder of LWOW

AC: Tell me what inspires you about working with young people? What have you learned from them?

EP: This question makes me smile! I recently turned 30, which puts me in a unique and fortunate position relative to seasoned colleagues and aspiring lawyers. It's a fantastic opportunity to serve as a bridge—like a translator of more than just words, but attitudes, cultures, and concepts, too—between the legal profession of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I still remember what a dial tone sounds like, a world before cellphones,

and my very first AOL screen name. It's fascinating to see how today's students, especially the Digital Natives, respond to and engage with traditional teaching methods, and how their learning styles and preferences influence how we can better equip our lawyers of tomorrow.

AC: In a recent ROSS interview, I asked Dr. Roland Vogl, (ED of CodeX and the Stanford Program in Law, Science and Technology —[here](#)) how the US can make sure it continues to lead in tech and innovation, particularly legal tech. He was very optimistic, saying the US has the entrepreneurial spirit, a culture that fosters partnerships, etc. Are you optimistic about US innovation?

EP: Absolutely optimistic. I'm the proud product of the American dream and have seen firsthand just how powerful an entrepreneurial, collaborative mindset can be. While funds and equipment are certainly important to R&D, a system and culture that reward, encourage, and promote unfettered development is key, and that's where the United States has tradition and strength. That said, it's important to remember that in today's globalized marketplace, talent (and the output of talent) is more mobile than ever. Further, more gets done through collaboration, so perhaps we can have a shift in mindset to view China and Canada as collaborators—not competitors.

While LWOW, for example, was founded by an American, led by Americans, and housed at an American institution, the vast majority of our schools are from outside the US (more than half are in Europe), and English is a second, third, or fourth language for nearly 70% of our participants. So, while the leadership (one that heavily values the entrepreneurial spirit, a culture that fosters partnerships, etc.) may come from the top, the magic is really a result of our unique, diverse, talented community.

AC: You are teaching Innovation, Technology, and the Law at U of M. Tell me what those three concepts mean in 2017? Can you imagine what your course would look like in 2025 or 2030? Take a look into a crystal ball and let me know.

EP: I'm hoping a crystal ball might show my dream of taking an off-roading trip through Central Asia coming true... All kidding aside, I bet if you asked 10 people this question, you'd get 10 different answers. I see the three like the borders of a triangle that encompass the sweet spot of the future of our profession—or, if you prefer, like the sides of a triangle-shaped trampoline (do those exist?) that acts as a springboard for the growth of our profession and its professionals.

I'm teaching a variation of this course as Guest Faculty at IE University in Madrid in October and November, and I'm very excited to see how the course plays out at a different institution with mostly non-American students. In 2025 or 2030, I'm certain there will be so many more exciting developments, tools, and technologies to share with and incorporate into the class. Further, I think the course is a trailblazer in that the skills it teaches (cultural competency, project management, leadership, teaming, collaboration, innovation, etc.) will be more deeply integrated into legal education by that time.

AC: I have asked this question quite a bit recently and am curious how you feel about it: Can you teach innovation? Or is it something you are born with, like being a great effective leader?

EP: It's certainly an important question that, as you know, yields a variety of interesting answers. My personal perspective is that we can learn to be innovators and leaders. The learning process is, itself, a journey, too—in addition to strengthening our abilities, it enables us to deepen our self-knowledge, self-confidence, and self-esteem.



Erika at an ikebana class at the Sogetsu Institute in Tokyo

AC: Florida has undergone some tough times lately. Do you have any personal stories of people doing great things in these rough times, hurricane related or not?

EP: Miami is such a unique, vibrant, and inspirational city with big challenges and even bigger opportunities related to its location, climate, and demography. I'm proud to be a trustee of the Miami chapter of the Awesome Foundation. Each month, we award a microgrant (\$1000) to an "awesome" project that positively impacts the lives of Miamians in some way. In the past, we've funded projects including anti-bullying plays for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, podcasts showcasing the

great science research happening in our local community, bicycle-powered charging stations to encourage folks to exercise, and experiential programs that help reduce youth recidivism. We're looking to focus our next grant on hurricane relief and look forward to the hurricane relief-related proposals generated by the talented, community-oriented, passionate people in Miami.



Erika relaxing in Miami

AC: If you work at University of Miami, is it compulsory to love sports?

EP: The University of Miami is certainly renowned for its athletic tradition and prowess! Although love for the Hurricanes isn't compulsory, the university has done an impressive job of cultivating deep-rooted fandom in the local community (even amongst those who went to other schools). Admittedly, I'm not much of a sports fan; however, I do enjoy the politics, business, and culture of sports (that is, watching people watch sports!). In May, I attended my first Seattle Sounders (Major League Soccer) game. What an experience!

AC: And here is one question I ask of everyone: What non-work

related item would you like to see invented right NOW? I have heard robot maid, time transporter, etc.

EP: So, I was lucky enough to have dinner with my parents last week, and posed this question to them. My mom laughed, and said it sounded like a "very Dad question." I'm grateful to have grown up in a family where these kinds of questions were totally normal and encouraged for conversation. In my frequent travels, I'm often inspired by cities who make being environmentally conscious an absolute breeze—offering

recycling to tenants wasn't mandatory in Miami Beach until recently! I've always been passionate about the environment, so I'd love to see something in-house that could offer urban dwellers, regardless of municipality, a convenient way to recycle, compost, and make a positive contribution to keeping our world clean and green.

AC: Anything else you'd like to add?

EP: Thank you so much for taking the time to interview me! I'm a big fan of ROSS and [ROSS CEO/Cofounder] Andrew Arruda (who will be a guest speaker in my upcoming class in Spain—thanks!), and I'm so grateful to be included in such a talented, accomplished bunch. One small note of interest: LWOW 2018 runs from January through April 2018, and applications opened on October 2, 2017 at lwow.org/apply. Any interested parties (potential students, mentors, sponsors, etc.) can feel free to reach out at erika@lwow.org.

AC: We thank you, Erika! And we are sure Andrew is going to WOW your Spanish students. He is a master of all things AI!

**If you're interested in adding the speed and efficiency of AI to your firm, contact us anytime:
rossintelligence.com**

