CHARLES J. BEARD, II
DIVERSITY
FELLOWSHIP
FOLEY HOAG LLP

# Talking Points: Tonny Mugisha

**2022 CHARLES J. BEARD, II DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT**



Law student Tonny Mugisha has been selected as one of Foley Hoag's 2022 Charles J. Beard, II Diversity Fellowship recipients. Tonny graduated from Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda with a Bachelor of Information Technology earning Second Class Honors in 2013. He currently attends the Boston College Law School as a Candidate for Juris Doctor. In this interview, Tonny shares his story moving from Uganda, supporting fundraising initiatives for various organizations and his pursuit of a law degree here in the U.S.

## Tell us about your background and your work fundraising for various organizations in Uganda.

My journey from Uganda to the United States took many years and I am happy to be celebrating my first full year here in the States. My career and perspective on life has changed over the last decade leading me from the information technology space to working with nonprofits to now pursing a career in law. My experience working with nonprofits in Uganda, Kenya, and Somalia was eye-opening and made me realize a career in law could someday help make lasting changes to address many of the issues facing residents in those countries.

## What are your legal career goals and how has Foley Hoag helped you achieve them?

I believe having a solid understanding of the law will be beneficial to helping me play a role in shaping policy reform back home in Africa. Through my legal career, I hope to be able to influence legislation in the countries where I spent so much time working with nonprofits. For example, in Somalia where I worked for close to three years, rape was not considered a crime; cases of rape were usually solved through a clan-based dispute resolution system in which traditional male elders dispensed justice according to customary laws. The rapist's family was usually made to pay a fine of money, camels, or goats to the survivor's family, and the case was settled after that. That is something that I felt needed to change and that can be done through legislative reforms or

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enforcement of the existing laws. I was advised by one of my mentors that if I want to make a difference in Africa, from a policy reform standpoint, I should consider getting a law degree from a U.S. school to fully understand policy and how it's made. At some point later in my legal career, I would love to work for the United Nations, or the Humanitarian arm of the European Union as a policy reform professional and leverage their influence over developing countries, specifically African countries, to drive policy/legislative reform at a macro level. After law school, I intend to work at a law firm, such as Foley Hoag, for a few years so I can obtain the legal training and skills that law firms offer—skills that I will utilize when I transition back to the humanitarian world.

### How have your past experiences helped you during your time with Foley Hoag?

My journey to Foley Hoag is vastly different compared to my fellow summer associates and I'm happy I can bring a different perspective to the firm. I am so grateful to have been given this opportunity to work at Foley Hoag and that drives me every day to give it my best.

### What about Foley Hoag drew you in?

Coming from a developing African country, I knew that it would be tough for me to fit in in this new environment. But the people whom I spoke to in career services at my law school assured me that Foley Hoag would be a great place to start because there is a great culture here. Based on my personal experience, I've seen firsthand how committed Foley Hoag is to diversity. During the interview process, I got to speak with black attorneys with similar backgrounds, such as Alyssa Pratt, who is from the Bahamas and has gone on to become one of my best friends here in the U.S. She shared her story about when she came to America and I felt like if she could thrive at the firm, so could I.