

Bitten By the International Law Bug

Brian D. Anderson's path to trial law went through Rwanda and Kosovo BY LINDSEY LEWANDOWSKI

Growing up the grandson of an attorney and the son of Appeals Court Judge Daniel Anderson, Brian D. Anderson knew he was destined for a future in law. What the now-Green Bay-based attorney *couldn't* predict was that he'd be drawn to international law.

In 2007, when Anderson began at Ohio Northern University's Pettit College of Law, he thought he'd be a trial lawyer right after graduation. "I had worked for two very incredible plaintiff attorneys for those years before going to law school," he says.

"But then I met a few people."

One was Austin Msowoya, chair of the Industrial Relations Court in the Republic of Malawi, who was studying at the ONU master's program in democratic governance and rule of law. "I was exposed to a whole new world—literally," he says. "When I left law school, I wanted to do something internationally."

Another was ONU law professor Jean-Marie Kamatali, who helped Anderson secure a job in Rwanda via a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) project. For nearly a year, Anderson worked as judicial law clerk for the chief justice for the Supreme Court of Rwanda.

Back in 2010, Anderson says, "the court didn't have law clerks like we have law clerks here. It was just something entirely new in concept." Working in French as well as English, Anderson worked on the court's internal processes and drafted appellate rules of procedure. He also assisted with interactions with the East African Court of Justice.

"When I finished my term as clerk, I was told that they were adopted," he says. "You could say I helped to revise the rules of appellate procedure to try to make them more accommodating, more transparent, more accessible. ... It was rewarding, and a bit overwhelming."

Another highlight of Anderson's time was visiting with a supreme court justice who invited him for tea and a discussion

about the rights of the accused under the U.S. Constitution.

"It was just an amazing experience," Anderson says. "I just got to have a lot of those kinds of moments, in addition to working on cases, and doing research ... and whatever task was asked of me, basically. The days were long, and the work was hard and challenging but rewarding. So I was kind of bitten by this bug of international work."


After graduation, Anderson worked at ONU for roughly seven years, including as assistant professor of law and on government-funded programs centered on the rule of law. One program involved working to reform legal education in Kosovo by teaching professors in Socratic method and U.S. law school teaching methodologies.

Anderson also traveled throughout Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, giving lectures on the rule of law and democratic governance. "They were all very special and valuable experiences," Anderson says of his many travels, "especially my time living and working in Rwanda."

He's been back about eight times since 2011, most recently in 2018 through USAID, focusing on creating training manuals for judges, prosecutors, and lawyers. Several of his Rwanda trips were taken with Kamatali.

"When we think of good governance, rule of law and democracy, if we can promote these kinds of changes, people's lives will be better," Anderson says.

After years of learning, teaching and traveling, Anderson felt ready to return to Wisconsin with his wife, Janet, and daughter, Olivia. In 2018, he became a trial attorney, focusing on personal injury, insurance defense and medical malpractice defense.

"I ended up becoming a trial lawyer; I just took the long way to do it," Anderson says, "and along the way filled a passport full of stamps and got to see the world and ... tried to make positive change in the areas of rule of law and good governance." 



From top: Anderson at the Office of the President of the Republic of Kosovo in 2015; Anderson with Industrial Relations Court Judge Austin Msowoya and Anti-Corruption Bureau attorney Balake Ndovi at the memorial in Lilongwe, Malawi, in 2015; Anderson outside Rwanda's Supreme Court in 2016.

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