

Shon Hopwood

Associate Law Professor at Georgetown University Law Center, Criminal Justice Reform Advocate, and Motivational Speaker

Shon Hopwood is an Associate Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center, where he is an expert on federal courts, criminal procedure (including federal sentencing), and prisoners' rights. Shon's unusual legal journey began not at law school, but federal prison, where he learned to write briefs for other prisoners. Hopwood was serving a 11-year sentence stemming from bank robberies in Nebraska. Two petitions for certiorari that he prepared were later granted review by the United States Supreme Court, a very unusual feat. Upon seeing Hopwood's work, former US Solicitor General Seth Waxman remarked that a petition, which in turn reduced the fellow prisoner's sentence by four years, was one of the best he had ever seen. Hopwood continued his work and went on to win cases for other prisoners in federal courts across the country, helping inmates from Indiana, Michigan, and Nebraska receive sentence reductions from lower courts.

After his release in 2009, he went to work for a printing company that produced Supreme Court briefs. He then attended the University of Washington School of Law, and received his J.D. as a Gates Public Service Law Scholar in 2014. He clerked for Judge Janice Rogers Brown at the prestigious United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. In 2014, the Supreme Court of Washington allowed Hopwood to take the state bar examination and, in 2015, he became a licensed lawyer in the state of Washington, 17 years after his sentencing.

Since becoming a licensed attorney, Shon's record of success has continued: In 2016 alone, he won three federal habeas appeals before the Fourth and Eighth Circuit Courts of Appeals. He went on to serve as a Teaching Fellow at the Georgetown University Law Center's Appellate Litigation Program, where he litigated criminal, immigration, civil rights, and federal statutory cases in federal courts of appeals. He is currently a tenure-track professor of law at Georgetown Law School and a founding partner at PrisonProfessors.com, where he works to create content that will improve the outcome of our nation's criminal justice system.

Shon's incredible story of second chances and success after failure has been featured in the *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, NPR, and most recently, on *60 Minutes*. He is the author of the memoir, *Law Man: My Story of Robbing Banks, Winning Supreme Cases and Finding Redemption*, and an advocate for criminal justice reform.

Shon's scholarship on courts and the criminal justice system has been published in the Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties, Fordham, and Washington law reviews, the Georgetown Law Journal's Annual Review of Criminal Procedure, and the American Criminal Law Review.