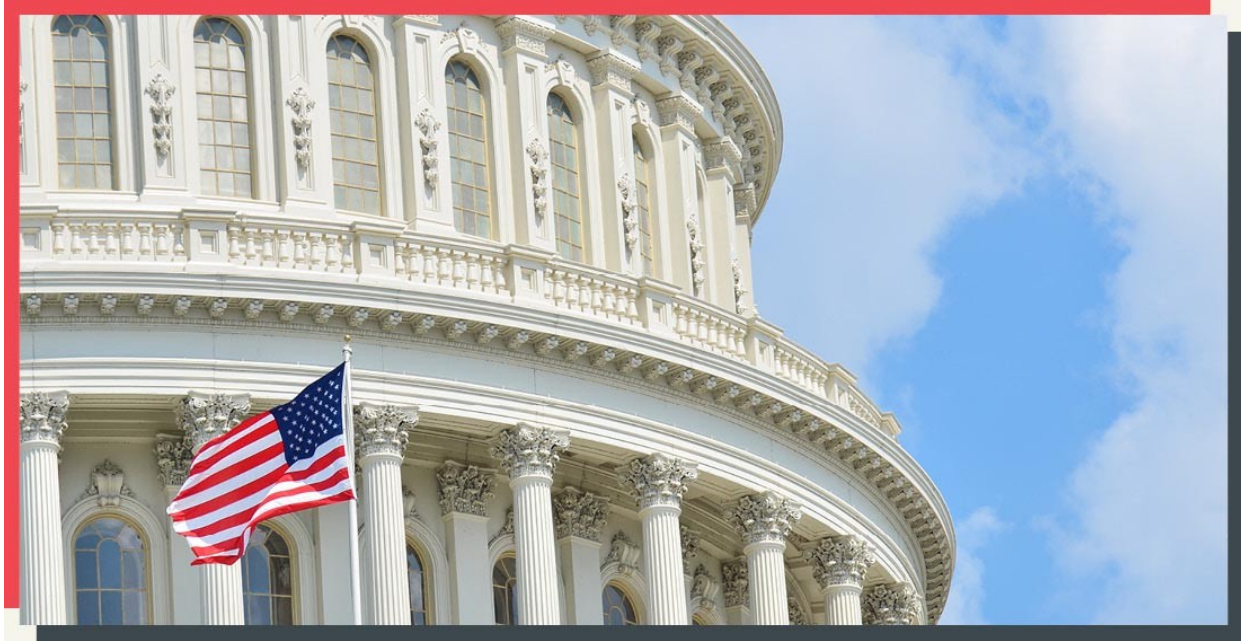


A Champion for Truth, Justice and Democracy

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This article was written by Kelley Bruss and originally published in Furman News.

The stakes are always high, whether Temidayo Aganga-Williams '08 is advocating for the federal government or for a private client. But he felt a unique weight in his work as senior investigative counsel for the House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack.

"Your professional success is tied to the survival of American democracy," Aganga-Williams said.

His work with the committee over 15 months was both an honor and a responsibility.

"The consequences of failure felt – and still feels – very present," he said.

In February, Aganga-Williams followed up his committee work by joining the partnership at Selendy Gay, a New York City law firm. He grew up in Atlanta and checked every future-lawyer box: "I like a good argument, I like to debate," he said, laughing. His favorite television show? "The Practice," obviously.

At Furman, he majored in political science and philosophy. His professors pushed him to "think outside of the southern and regional box," he said.

Following law school at Cornell, Aganga-Williams worked as a litigation associate at a Wall Street firm. He clerked for a federal judge and ultimately became an assistant U.S. attorney in New York. Prosecuting offered an intense opportunity to practice the skills he'd already been developing.

A federal prosecutor handles a case from investigation to indictment to the courtroom, all the way through appeals. Sometimes the victim is impersonal – society, or the financial system, for example. But Aganga-Williams had a special affinity for cases with individual victims, opportunities to "vindicate someone's rights."

"When you meet a victim and you see your work can give some semblance of justice to that individual – that is going to give you a drive that's hard to replicate," he said.

When the January 6th committee was formed in the summer of 2021, senior staff went looking for the group's investigative team. A previous supervisor from the U.S. Attorney's Office recommended Aganga-Williams.

He got the first call on a Wednesday in early fall. By Monday he was hired, and in less than two weeks he had left the U.S. Attorney's Office and was in Washington, D.C., with about 25 other lawyers.

"There really wasn't a day to waste," he said.

Aganga-Williams was part of a group investigating three major areas: President Trump's assertions that he was the winner of the 2020 election, his campaign's use of those false claims to raise money and the funding behind the rallies that led up the Jan. 6 attack.

The work felt a lot like his job as a prosecutor: subpoenas, interviews, depositions, "trying to find out what happened."

Team members set aside a variety of political perspectives to achieve a single objective: "Folks who were really, really focused on getting it right, being fair and making the country proud," he said.

It's not that they were untouched by what the entire country had watched unfold mere months before. But the truth was the priority.

"You didn't have the luxury to sit around and feel your feelings," he said. "There was immense pressure to get it right."

Aganga-Williams took two months off after the Jan. 6th committee delivered its report. Now, at his new firm, he specializes in high-stakes commercial litigation and government enforcement actions. And he never forgets that a small case for a lawyer may be a watershed for a client.

"While there may not be American democracy at stake, something for them is at stake."

Attorney

- Temidayo Aganga-Williams