Frances Nicole L. Tabios

Associate

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Practice

- Business & Commercial Law
- Land Use & Eminent Domain
- Litigation & Dispute Resolution
- Wills, Trusts & Estates

Education

- University of Hawaii, William S. Richardson School of Law (J.D.) magna cum laude
- University of Hawaii at Manoa, Political Science (B.A.) Minor in Philippine Language and Literature

Frances Nicole L. Tabios is an Associate in the firm's Business & Commercial Law, Land Use & Eminent Domain, Litigation & Dispute Resolution, and Wills, Trusts & Estates practice groups. Nicole is fluent in English, Ilocano, and Tagalog, and proficient in conversational Japanese, helping to grow Damon Key's multilingual team.

Prior to joining the firm, Nicole was a Judicial Law Clerk at the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii for the Honorable Shanlyn A.S. Park. In this position, she researched and drafted judicial opinions and orders on a wide range of dispositive and procedural motions and analyzed complex legal and factual issues across civil cases.

Nicole earned her law degree, magna cum laude, from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, William S. Richardson School of Law, and is a proud Ulu Lehua Scholar. Grounded in mentorship, service, and the values of resilience and community, the scholars program helped Nicole develop a deeper appreciation for how the law can uplift those it touches.

While in law school, she received the CALI Excellence for the Future Award for the Highest Grade in Legal Research and served as the Executive Editor for Volume 25 and Staff Editor for Volume 24 of the Asian-Pacific Law and Policy Journal. Nicole was a Teaching Assistant in Constitutional Law and Island Leadership Lab. She was also a Native American Moot Court Orator, Student Bar Association Senator (for all three years), Filipino Law Student Association Vice President and President, and a Law School Visit Coordinator. She also served as a captain for the Ete Bowl team.

In Spring 2023, Nicole was a Scholar Advocate and Research Assistant to Professor Eric K. Yamamoto and Professor Susan K. Serrano, where she conducted legal research for critical analysis and collaborated on writing a scholarly memorandum on the legacy of the coram nobis Korematsu case. During the summer of 2023, Nicole was a Summer Law Associate at Damon Key, where she conducted legal research and prepared memoranda assessing parties' claims for a wide variety of cases. She also assisted with trial preparation, researching, analyzing, and drafting pleadings, discovery requests, and procedural and substantive motions.

During the summer of 2022, Nicole was a Judicial Extern to the Honorable Shanlyn A.S. Park of the First Circuit Court of Hawaii, before she was appointed to the Federal bench. While there, Nicole researched procedural

and substantive issues concerning domestic violence cases, prepared memoranda, and observed daily court hearings and jury trials.

During her time in Judge Park's chambers as an extern and a law clerk, Nicole witnessed firsthand how the judge's mentorship extended beyond the courtroom to the next generation of lawyers. Additionally, she observed how Judge Park's work ethic and ability to approach each case with both fairness and humanity was helping to shape people's faith in the justice system.

Nicole holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a minor in Philippine Language and Literature from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, graduating summa cum laude in just 2.5 years. She was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Pi Sigma Alpha and the Manoa Pre-Law Association.

Born in the Philippines, Nicole moved to Hawaii at age seven, was raised in Aiea and attended Sacred Hearts Academy. According to Nicole, becoming an attorney was never part of her childhood plan. She originally envisioned a future in the medical field, but that later changed when she took AP U.S. History and AP Government in high school and began to understand how deeply the law and government shape people's daily lives. The versatility of a law degree and the opportunity to make a meaningful impact ultimately drew her in. That realization sparked a lasting commitment to advocacy, shaped by Chief Justice William S. Richardson's legacy of protecting the "little guy down the stream." In that spirit, she believes that the law must be practiced with integrity as a way of serving others and expanding access to justice.

As a lawyer, she enjoys having the chance to think critically, solve complex problems and connect with people from all walks of life. Her greatest strengths include her resiliency, desire to foster inclusivity and a commitment to making others feel heard, often using her sense of humor to build rapport and put people at ease.

Nicole currently lives in Honolulu and volunteers with the Honolulu District Court Access to Justice Room and the William S. Richardson School of Law's Refugee and Immigration Law Clinic. She loves exploring the world and discovering hidden gem restaurants. When she's not whipping up matcha and hojicha lattes, she enjoys cooking a variety of cuisines. She stays active with weightlifting, sculpt yoga and pickleball.

Professional and Community Affiliations

- American Bar Association
- Hawaii State Bar Association
- Hawaii Filipino Lawyers Association
- Hawaii Women Lawyers

Bar Admissions

- State of Hawaii
- U.S. District Court (District of Hawaii)