

Striving to Make an Impact

By Caitlin Peterson

As a twenty-one year old African-American, Blackfoot Native-American woman attending a predominantly white and conservative law school, the opportunities to help minority and disadvantaged students are not always the easiest to find. However, my dedication to celebrate and foster diversity in all communities, whether it be higher education, the local township, or in the national field of law, motivate me to pursue the position of Student Delegate of Diversity and Inclusion for the ABA.

Because of my own experiences as a triple-minority trying to navigate a white-dominated world to further myself to success so that I can give back to disadvantaged communities, I entered college seeking out opportunities to help the community at large primarily through empowerment and education. During my undergraduate studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I was an avid participant in student-led initiatives to help the disadvantaged in many communities, namely through teaching various empowerment and legal rights courses to local youth through UNC Splash and UNC CampWrite, as well as serving as a mentor for diverse students through the UNC Out of State Association Student Mentor Program. Academically, I engaged myself in higher level courses focused on diversity and inclusion through my English major and Anthropology minor, engaging these skills in drafting workable solutions to issues such as Native American empowerment through language and the necessity of diversity in white-dominated spaces for better qualities of life for all populations. Through these experiences, I learned how to channel my unique, diverse instincts to not only help my target audiences, but also to educate and inspire my white cohorts on the value of diversity to achieve greater things for the entire community.

At Washington and Lee University School of Law, I am one-half of the W&L's BLSA Moot Court team that won First Runner Up in the MABLSA's Regional Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition and was a Quarterfinalist at the National Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition, where I successfully argued both sides of the eligibility of a mentally ill juvenile delinquent for capital punishment before multiple panels of real-life judges and attorneys. Competing at only 21 years of age, I was the youngest participant overall and first 1L in the history of Washington and Lee to advance so far in such a competition. Most recently, I have been elected Project Manager of W&L's Pro Bono Board as well as the Moot Court Coordinator for W&L's BLSA for the 2017-2018 school year. This year, I also participated in a BLM panel organized by W&L's Black Law Student Association (BLSA) and Students for Black Unity Association to discuss my experiences with the Lexington community as an advocate for youth empowerment through diverse education and better access to resources. These are the same

goals I wish to implement on a national stage as an ABA Delegate, creating more financial support and networking opportunities for minority and non-traditional students, groups that often have the most to lose without better attention. By better serving these law students and others so they may attain better opportunities after law school, the legal field will truly be strengthened by diversified viewpoints, professional backgrounds, and overall skillsets that will better serve the community of attorneys and their clients alike.

While attending law school takes a great portion of my time, my efforts to give back to the community continues through my work with my second chapter of Binky Patrol, the Lexington Binky Patrol. Founded in September 2016, I have coordinated the efforts of multiple volunteers across the state of Virginia to serve the needs of disadvantaged people in need of love and encouragement. In our first year, we have serviced Project Horizon, a Lexington battered woman's shelter, and the Carilion Clinic Children's Center in Roanoke, VA to much success and gratitude from recipients and correspondents alike. I am very dedicated to this position because it keeps me actively engaged as a leader of community service in my area, and seeing the impact of my work really inspires me to pursue my goal of public service as a lawyer.

In the end, I cannot imagine my time in white-dominated spaces going as well for me had I not sought out opportunities to serve the minority and disadvantaged groups in my community. As many of these people have backgrounds like my own, I feel it is always advantageous for me to strive for inclusion and service to as many diverse groups as I can so that I may one day live in a world where faces that look like mine are more common in places they were previously not thought possible. After all, without such systems, being a minority lawyer would be an even harder endeavor than it currently is, and so I will always strive to fight for their inclusion and success if elected ABA Delegate of Diversity and Inclusion.

Caitlin Peterson

EDUCATION

Washington and Lee University School of Law, Lexington, Virginia

Candidate for Juris Doctor, May 2019

Honors:

Merit Scholarship-Washington and Lee University School of Law

2017 Regional Seminar Scholarship-Local Government Attorneys of Virginia (LGA) (Lynchburg, VA)

Regional First Runner-Up-2016-2017 Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition (Pittsburgh, PA)

National Quarterfinalist-2017-Frderick Douglass Moot Court Competition (Houston, TX)

Activities:

Project Manager-Pro Bono Board

Vice President-Elect, Moot Court Coordinator-Washington and Lee Black Law Student Association

Member-Women Law Student Organization

University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC

Bachelor of Arts, in English, August 2013- May 2016

Honors:

Hayden B. Renwick Academic Achievement Award-six semesters

First Runner-Up- 2016 Willie P. Magnum Oratory Competition

Member-National Society for Leadership and Success

Member-Sigma Alpha Lambda

Activities:

UNC Camp-Write School Outreach/ 2015 Summer Camp Counselor

UNC Splash Instructor-3 courses

Member-Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Fraternity

4 IRB-certified research projects-English and anthropology

EXPERIENCE

Honorable Johnny E. Morrison, Portsmouth District Court, Portsmouth, VA

Judicial Shadowing, June 2016

Learned internal workings of local judicial system through supervised participation with Judge Morrison and staff, visiting attorneys, and court clerks

Honorable Johnny E. Morrison, Portsmouth Circuit Court, Portsmouth, VA

Summer Law Clerk, May 2017-Present

Currently assisting Circuit Court law clerk in drafting response letters, filing uncontested divorces and adoptions, and preparing motions. Observing civil and criminal proceedings at state trial and appellate levels.

Binky Patrol, Woodbridge, VA and Lexington, VA

Local Chapter Founder/Coordinator, September 2014-Present

Lead and organized community efforts to create and distribute handmade blankets to at-risk children and homeless populations in two cities; verified community service hours as regulated by local courts for petty offenders

OTHER SKILLS and INTERESTS

Lexis Professional Research Certified; Working knowledge of Spanish and Arabic (verbal and written); creative writing; traveled to 5 continents