
MARSHALL'S LAW

Volume 3, Issue 1

Fall 2000

ND BLSA Executive Board & Members for 2000-2001

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President's Corner

Qiana Lillard, BLSA President

Dear BLSA Family,

I hope that this newsletter finds you in good spirits and great health. As Fall Break approaches, 1Ls are preparing for practice exams and returning students are just wrapping up On Campus Interviews. The leaves have already begun to change colors and the music of the ND Marching Band has become a familiar weekend sound. So while some things have changed, much is still the same here at NDLS.

BLSA began the year by co-sponsoring a Welcome Reception for all incoming Students of Color during orientation weekend. That was followed by a Welcome Back BBQ hosted by Dean Vincent Rougeau and family at his home. On October 25th BLSA, along with ALSA, HLSA, and NALSA will host the Second Annual Minority Student Law School Forum. This event is designed to help minority students from the region successfully apply to law school. Additionally, on October 27th BLSA will participate in the Annual Multicultural TGIF. If you happen to be in town for the Air Force game, please join us for good food and entertainment. We are also planning to sponsor several speakers this year as well as continue our commitment to community service projects in the South Bend area.

You will be happy to learn that BLSA recently approved a date for the 28th Annual BLSA Weekend. The reunion/symposium will take place April 6th-8th 2001. This year's theme is: BLSA's Legal Legacy: Using the Past & the Present to Create a Network for the Future.

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In recent years, the coordination of BLSA weekend has rested squarely on the shoulders of the Vice President. Those of you who may have served in this capacity surely recall what a daunting task this may have been. This year the Executive Board is working hard to assist our Vice President Myra McKenzie '02 in her role as chair of the BLSA Weekend Committee. In the coming weeks we will be attempting to select a speaker. It is our goal to have a tentative speaker identified by the end of the month. As you may know, Alumni attendance at this past year was poor. We are looking carefully at ways to both improve the weekend and increase attendance.

One of the primary things discussed this past BLSA Weekend was the formation of a sanding committee devoted to addressing diversity issues within the law school. This committee ideally would be comprised of students, faculty, and alumni. We have recently received Dean O' Hara's support of this idea, however, to date nothing has been definitively set. If you are interested in participating in this committee and would like to be informed about developments, please contact me via e-mail at Lillard.1@nd.edu.

In closing I would just like to say that it is my pleasure to serve as President of BLSA this year. I am looking forward to a full and productive year. If I can be of any assistance to you or answer any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Qiana Lillard
ND '98 JD '01

Recruiting, Retention, & the Harsh Reality

Myra McKenzie, BLSA Vice President

As BLSA strives to increase its visibility at the law school and aids in creating a tolerant atmosphere for difference and diversity, we must face a harsh reality—Notre

Dame Law School lacks Black students. As I pondered the reasons why this is so, I came up with two in particular—in the past, the administration has made little effort to recruit and retain Black students.

Historically, recruitment of students has been left solely to the Office of Admissions. This might suffice for majority students, but when seeking to increase minority presence at the law school, a different approach has to be taken. Mass mailings and a booth at various law forums have proven insufficient. It takes a concerted effort to bring us here.

In recent years with the assistance of Heather Moriconi and the admissions office, BLSA members were asked to call and respond to questions from prospective Black students. Due in part to these efforts, Notre Dame and BLSA are pleased to welcome 9 African-American students to the law school community this year. They are: Emily Bienko of Tranquility, NJ, Amy Bowman of Boston, MA, Sylvia Hanna of Fresno, CA, Michelle Johnson of Tampa, FL, Eric Mahler of Chicago, IL, Chris Oliver of Kansas City, MO, Kevin Snowden of Seattle, WA, Jennifer Thrash of Bay City, TX and Natalie Wight of Portland, OR. While this evidences a 125% increase in the number of Black students from last year, we believe that composing 5% of the 1L class is not enough--we want more.

This year in an effort to recruit minority students the administration invited all of the ethnic organizations to send a student representative to various regional LSDAS law school forums. I was appointed by the BLSA Executive Board to join Heather at the LSDAS Southeast region law school forum in Atlanta, GA September 22nd-23rd. On Friday, I spent the day at my undergraduate Alma Mater Spelman College and Morehouse College doing classroom presentations. On Saturday, I joined Heather at the forum and spoke to prospective students. I think it was quite beneficial to have a student on hand to answer some

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questions. Perhaps this trip coupled with BLSA phone calls and e-mails will yield more Black applications and in turn, more Black students. As was stated earlier, however, the current problem is two-fold. Recruiting efforts must continue to increase, but so must retention efforts.

As I survey the 3L class, I am disturbed by the fact that our president will be the only Black woman to graduate from the law school this school year, and this is not because she was the only Black woman to enter with her class. Secondly, when I reflect on my first year of law school, I am reminded of how the majority of my Black classmates seriously considered leaving this law school, and while I realize that the administration can only do so much, I have to wonder if a greater effort to retain Black students could be made.

We all recognize that law school is a far too sophisticated endeavor to desire hand-holding or ego-stroking, but showing genuine concern is never out grown. It will take that on the administration's and BLSA's part to turn the tide on our lack of diversity issue.

BLSA is committed to creating a student-based network to help admissions recruiting efforts and a welcoming atmosphere when students arrive to increase retention. Hopefully, over the next few years with increasing administrative support, our "harsh reality" of the present can become a vague memory of the past.

Presidential Election 2000 and African-Americans

Nadira Kirkland, BLSA Co-Community Service Chair

The first presidential election of the millennium is a heated race. The Republican Party's candidate, Governor George W. Bush has represented himself as a compassionate conservative; while the Democratic Party's candidate, Vice-President Al Gore, has represented himself as the candidate for the working class. But is Governor George W.

Bush "moderate" enough to attract the votes of the African-American community that historically votes for the Democrats?

Looking strictly at political ideology, it would seem that Governor George W. Bush would appeal to many members of the African-American community. Bush touts a pro-life stance and the importance of religion, education, and family. With the recent indiscretions of President Bill Clinton still beaming down on the Democratic Party, George W. Bush seems like a candidate who could capture the conservative Republican votes while picking up many votes from the African-American community.

However, many African-Americans do not feel that Governor George W. Bush will adequately represent them or, more appropriately, the issues that concern them. Most African-Americans feel strongly about education and being able to provide for their families. George W. Bush supports taking money out of the public schools and issuing school vouchers. According to the Governor, everyone will be able to get quality education, regardless of economic status. But, many African-Americans do not feel that the voucher system would work in their favor. They view this as a way of taking money away from the public school system. Therefore, some African-Americans believe that their children are going to suffer by attending poorly funded public schools. In addition, many African-Americans do not feel that the Republican Party is in favor of affirmative action, and Republican-proposed tax-cuts would not affect their economic status.

While African-Americans have traditionally voted for the Democratic Party, many may feel the party has lost some of its values. Vice-President Al Gore may be tarnished because of President Clinton's impeachment trial. Many African-Americans thought Al Gore should have played more vocal role in defending the President. Also, Al Gore has stated that he is in favor of the newly FDA approved morning after pill,

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which may not go over well with African-American religious leaders. Additionally, African-Americans may agree with Al Gore's position on affirmative action, and approve of his commitment to social programs.

Although both candidates were on the Oprah Winfrey Show, it is going to take a lot more than public appearances with African-American celebrities to secure votes from African-Americans. The deciding factor for many African-Americans may come down to economics. The economy is doing very well, and President Clinton has appointed a number of African-Americans to fill many seats in his cabinet. Many African-Americans are satisfied with the job that President Clinton is doing and may feel that electing Vice-President Al Gore will mean a continuation of a prosperous economy and more African-Americans appointments. Still, a few African-Americans are reaching the economic status where George W. Bush's tax cuts would appeal to them.

The bottom line is that the 2000 Election centers on issues that affect all sectors of the African-American community, and hopefully, everyone will vote and let his or her political voice, regardless of what it is, be heard.

Black Law Students Association
Notre Dame Law School
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN 46556

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address Label

BLSA Alumni News

1. Congratulations to the Class of 2000 BLSA's newest Alumni.
2. In April 2000 **Tamara Walker** JD '00 became the first African-American woman to captain a National Champion Barristers Team.
3. Also best wishes to **Dion Spencer** JD '00 and **Candace Clarke** JD '00 on their marriage this past May.

Upcoming Events

2nd ANNUAL MINORITY LAW SCHOOL FORUM
10/25/00

FIFTH ANNUAL MULTICULTURAL TGIF
10/27/00

THANKSGIVING COMMUNITY SERVICE
PROJECT*

CHRISTMAS SERVICE PROJECT*

**Date to be determined*

**INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE
TO MARSHALL'S LAW? CONTACT TAMONA
BRIGHT VIA E-MAIL AT BRIGHT.4@nd.edu**