

# HENNEPIN LAWYER

## Judge Sarah West

2019-2020  
HCBF President

+ Profiles  
in Practice





# HCBA MEMBER SOCIAL

Join us downtown overlooking  
the IDS Crystal Court

**JOLLIET EVENT SPACE**  
The Marquette Hotel, 3rd Floor  
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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14 from 5:00–7:00 PM



Enjoy a Free  
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### INVITING ALL HCBA MEMBERS:

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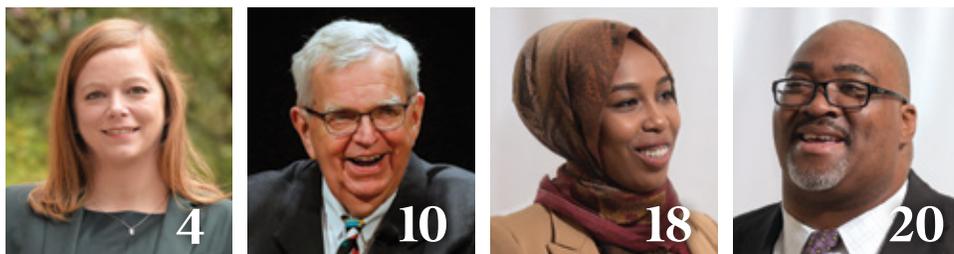
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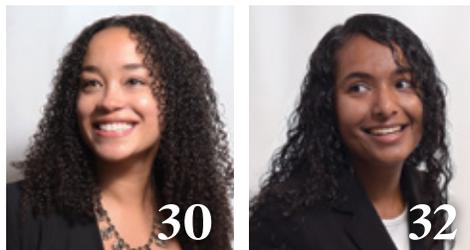
# HENNEPIN LAWYER

Official Publication of the Hennepin County Bar Association



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# With Whom Are You in Relationship?



So much of what we do—as lawyers, as bar associations, as business owners, as partners, as friends, as family—is about relationships. As Val Jensen says in this, our fourth-annual Profiles in Practice issue, “To break down barriers, we need to get to know each other beyond the resume.”

Profiles in Practice gives HCBA the opportunity to shine a light on some of the up-and-comers and unsung heroes of our local bar. As in past years, we feature interviews with nine lawyers, many of whom may not yet be known to you. It is a humbling experience to edit this issue—the attorneys being profiled and the writers capturing their stories do the heavy lifting.

The Profiles issue always turns my thoughts toward the power of relationships. In March 2015, for the 50th anniversary of the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, I attended a conference in Birmingham, Alabama. The Reverend Dr. Mark Morrison Reed opened the conference. Reed has studied the Selma voting rights march; his book, *Selma Awakening: How the Civil Rights Movement Tested and Changed Unitarian Universalism*, analyzes the role that the Unitarian Universalist denomination played in Selma and its aftermath.

In his keynote, Reed retold how, after the marchers were savagely beaten and bloodied

on their first attempt to cross the bridge, what became known as “Bloody Sunday,” a call went out for people to come to Selma to bolster the ranks of marchers. It was not just a figurative call or a sound bite on the news; Reed explained that before dawn on Monday morning, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sent out a telegram calling upon clergy of all faiths to come to Selma. Several of those who received a telegram or a personal phone call from Dr. King were Unitarian Universalist clergy who had attended the Boston School of Theology with King. Dana McClean Greeley, then president of the UUA, was one of the people who received the telegram. Those clergy then called their colleagues. By Tuesday, the ranks of marchers had swelled significantly.

Reed explained that although ideology and justice and the righteousness of the cause were clearly on people’s minds, it was their relationships that prompted them to journey to Selma. When someone calls and asks you to go, you go. Reed asked the audience “with whom are you in relationship?” It became the mantra for the rest of his talk. How might your relationships make a difference in your life or even transform your life?

That question echoes in my head. With whom are you in relationship? What connections do you seek, which friendships do you cultivate, with whom do you choose to build alliances? Profiles in Practice was born of these questions.

We could learn a few things about relationship from the attorneys profiled in this issue. Take note of how often they cite their families for support. They have mentors. They seek to give back. Whom do you mentor or sponsor? With whom are you in relationship?

For Profiles in Practice to have its greatest impact, we hope it will inspire you to reach out to someone you have met but do not know well and invite them to coffee or lunch to get to know them better. Get to know your colleagues beyond their resumes.



**Eric T. Cooperstein**

November/December  
Issue Editor

[etc@ethicsmaven.com](mailto:etc@ethicsmaven.com)

Eric T. Cooperstein, the “Ethics Maven,” defends lawyers and judges against ethics complaints, provides lawyers with advice and expert opinions, and represents lawyers in fee disputes and law firm break-ups.

# New. Now. Next.

In addition to practicing law, I have spent the last 25 years of my life working with nonprofit organizations in a leadership role. This has not only been personally and professionally rewarding, but also has shown me the true value of people working together to make others' lives better and more fulfilling. Much of what an association does happens behind the curtains where only a few people get to see how the sausage is made. Each individual member may be impacted in some way by the work of the organization, but outside of the leadership positions, it is hard to truly understand the scope of an organization's impact. That is certainly true with the HCBA.

Bar associations around the country are wrestling with declining membership. The rate of decline is slow but pervasive. There are many reasons for the decline including fewer new attorneys, competing legal trade associations, and a feeling among new lawyers that membership in a bar association is not important. Bar associations must convince lawyers of the value of membership. We have the obligation to demonstrate our value.

Behind the curtain, volunteer leaders and staff are aware of the countless programs and initiatives offered by the HCBA. Some of these serve thousands of members. Some serve a dozen or less. They are all important and they are all part of the fabric of our trade association. They are also all designed to fulfill our mission statement:

*The Hennepin County Bar Association exists to serve the needs of its membership by advancing professionalism, ethical conduct, diversity, competence, practice development, and collegiality in the legal profession. The association shall strive to ensure the fairness and accessibility of the legal system, promote public understanding and confidence in our system of justice, and work with the courts to improve the administration of justice.*

Each one of these goals is important and requires an organized body to continually push for our profession to reach the spirit of the words. My own measurement for everything we do is simple: Does it benefit our members? That is the true test for every project we engage in. That is why we exist.

In that light, as we begin our second hundred years, we are being reborn as an organization. Last year, after going through a difficult and time-consuming process, the HCBA, Ramsey County Bar Association, and the Minnesota State Bar Association agreed to merge our staffs—we are not merging our organizations! We still operate as separate bodies with independent boards of directors. However, a combined staff now serves all three entities.

While there will be cost savings for each organization, that was not the driving force for the staff merger. The real benefit envisioned by our boards was the opportunity to share resources for the benefit of our members. This idea is analogous to how a public electric company functions. Ninety percent of the time, a utility gets by using 60 percent of its production capacity. But on the hottest days of the summer, the utility must put all of its capacity to work. The old HCBA staff was 15 people strong. Our merged staff now exceeds 40 people.

When we need to call on resources for the "hottest days of the year," we have much more capacity available to us.

Another important benefit that will accrue over time is collaboration between all three associations. This is a huge benefit that may take years to realize. I have asked our Finance and Planning Committee, chaired by Brandon Vaughn, to spend the next year analyzing how we can use our merged staff and new relationships with the other associations to enhance the services we provide our membership. I know there is great opportunity in this endeavor. It will

take some time and study, but I am convinced we will all be better off in the future for what we begin today.

I want to conclude this article by talking about one really important initiative we are working on. Last year, the Minnesota Supreme Court challenged the leaders in the legal community to step up and try to find ways to attack the wellness crisis that is facing lawyers across the country. Much has already been written about the crisis. In short, lawyers suffer from a disproportionate amount of wellness deficits than the general population. We have a task force in place, chaired by Michael Boulette, that is working on some steps the HCBA can take to address the situation. The task force will report back to the HCBA board at the end of the year. This is the kind of challenge that a trade association is designed to address. We have the resources to drive change. I don't know what the task force recommendations will be, but I am confident that the HCBA will be at the forefront of positive change for our industry. It is a great way to continue to serve our members in the next century.



**Jeff  
Bail**

2019-2020  
HCBA President

[jbail@yostbail.com](mailto:jbail@yostbail.com)

Mr. Bail is the managing partner in the Minneapolis office of Yost & Bail where he practices in the area of Insurance Subrogation. He is the founder and past President of the National Association of Subrogation Professionals.



# Meet Judge Sara West

Hennepin County  
Bar Foundation  
2019-2020 President



Judge Sarah West is the president of the Hennepin County Bar Foundation (HCBF), which serves as the charitable arm of the HCBA. She is a judge with the Fourth Judicial District in Hennepin County.

What inspired you to join the HCBF board and serve as an officer?

I first became interested in the HCBF when I participated in the Leaders Impacting the Nonprofit Community (LINC) program through the HCBA. I was hoping to work with nonprofits in the community, and the LINC program provided a wonderful opportunity to learn how to best do that. In addition, the LINC program introduced me to the great work that the HCBF does. I loved that by working with the HCBF, I would be able to have an impact and support several nonprofits at one time. I first worked on the grant review committee and saw the strength of the HCBF. I wanted to become more involved, so I applied to sit on the board. I really wanted to push myself to help the HCBF as much as possible, so when a position as an officer opened,

**"I have seen and continue to see on a daily basis the need for partners in the work to provide access to justice. Being a part of HCBF allows me to use that perspective to strengthen those partnerships."**

I decided to apply. I have been so happy I did as each year I have seen the wonderful work of the non profits we help to fund and the great commitment that our legal community has to the HCBF and these organizations.

### What are your goals for the HCBF this year?

My goals for the HCBF this year are to build on the amazing start of the Fellows Program under [2018-2019 HCBF President] Vince Louwagie's great leadership and to further strengthen our fundraising and ability to help make a real impact to the nonprofits to which we provide grants.

### What would you like the local legal community to know about the HCBF?

I hope the local legal community knows that the HCBF is a wonderful way to help organizations that are working to support underserved and underrepresented populations with a myriad of legal issues and challenges. We are so fortunate in Hennepin County to have numerous attorneys that work directly helping these populations and those that volunteer their time to do the same. Whether by working directly with the HCBF to help raise money and/or determine to which organizations the grants will be given, or by giving money to the HCBF for its grants, the HCBF provides an excellent way to get involved with some of the remarkable nonprofits in our community promoting access to justice in Hennepin County.

### How has the HCBF changed in the past few years?

The HCBF has made some significant steps to become self-sufficient while increasing its impact in the community and providing more opportunities for lawyers to engage with the HCBF and the organizations it assists, as well as meeting other like-minded lawyers in the community. The HCBF worked with the HCBA to ensure that it was covering its own expenses

and managing its own operations while continuing to operate as the charitable arm for the Association. The HCBF has continued to strengthen its fundraising capabilities by revamping the Bar Benefit and Golf Classic to offer additional opportunities for individuals to give and be recognized. In addition, the HCBF has started the Fellows Program, which recognizes attorneys in our community that are committed to providing access to justice in Hennepin County. In its first year, the Fellows Program provided an additional \$33,000 in funds for the HCBF to use in its grant-making.

### How has the Fellows Program been received in its first year?

Reports from Fellows are that they have enjoyed being able to be more involved with the HCBF as well as meet and talk to other like-minded lawyers at the Fellows events. The Fellows were recognized at larger events like the Bar Benefit and had a special reception and breakfast at which they were not only thanked for their contribution to the HCBF, but also given the opportunity to hear from and meet with Mayor Jacob Frey, to network, and engage with the other Fellows.

### As a judge, and previously a public defender, what perspective do you bring to the HCBF?

I bring the perspective of someone who has primarily worked as a public interest attorney and who, as a result, has had many experiences with the community that the HCBF strives to serve. Both of those positions have made me very familiar with many of the nonprofits that receive grants from the HCBF. This familiarity and perspective gives me a clear vision of the type of impact that the HCBF can and does have. I have seen and continue to see on a daily basis the need for partners in the work to provide access to justice. Being a part of HCBF allows me to use that perspective to strengthen those partnerships.

### How can HCBA members get involved with and support the foundation?

It is wonderfully easy to get involved with and support the HCBF. First, and easiest, is by making a financial donation to the HCBF. Second, and allowing more involvement and engagement, is by providing time and financial support for our fundraising events, the Golf Classic and the Bar Benefit. Not only do these events benefit the HCBF, but they also provide the ability to network and meet with like-minded attorneys that may not otherwise cross someone's path. Third, serve on a committee. For example, the grant review committee handles the crucial task of determining which organizations receive HCBF grants. This committee is a wonderful way to become involved in the HCBF, learn about the wonderful nonprofits that apply for and receive our grants, and provide time and energy in the furtherance of justice in Hennepin County. Finally, the HCBF is always searching for strong, dynamic, interested people to serve on its board of directors.

### What do you like to do in your free time?

When I get spare time, I like to spend it with my family. Whether just hanging out at home or going to a movie or one of the kids' activities, time with family is treasured. I also like to read, watch both quality and not-so-quality television shows, and be outside especially in the fall.

# A TRUE MEASURE OF JUSTICE

HENNEPIN COUNTY BAR FOUNDATION



In 2019, the HCBF awarded grants to local nonprofits that work to provide legal access and support to those in need. Because each organization is unique in the way they provide services, we would like to highlight the collective work of our grantees to show how your support of the foundation promotes access to justice for the people of Hennepin County.

**\$270,400**  
2019 GRANTS  
AWARDED

## HCBF PARTNER GRANT

**\$130,000**

### VOLUNTEER LAWYERS NETWORK

Each year, the HCBF gives a meaningful contribution to Volunteer Lawyers Network – the pro bono arm of the Hennepin County Bar Association. HCBF funding assists VLN in protecting and enforcing the legal rights of low-income Minnesotans.



VLN CONNECTED  
**715**  
PRO BONO  
VOLUNTEERS

VLN DELIVERED  
**8,846**  
LEGAL  
SERVICES

VLN ASSISTED  
**7,266**  
LOW-INCOME  
MINNESOTANS

## FELLOWS

Making a Difference  
in Hennepin County



Established by the HCBF board of directors in 2018, the Fellows Program is an honorary society of attorneys, judges, law faculty, and legal scholars who have committed to financially support the goals and objectives of the foundation. 15 Founding Fellows and 60 Fellows brought in **\$33,000** this year that was given away in community grants. Thank you to our Fellows for this commitment to closing the justice gap in Hennepin County.

## SUPPORTING THE HCBF

With support from HCBA members, law firms, partner organizations, and the legal community, the HCBF provides strategic funding to a variety of nonprofits in Hennepin County. We thank this past year's donors for contributing to this work. The HCBF relies primarily on support from our annual Bar Benefit, Golf Classic, the HCBA dues check-off, and the HCBF Fellows Program. We could not accomplish this work without you.





## COMMUNITY GRANTS **\$140,400**

The Advocates for Human Rights  
**\$5,000**

Cancer Legal Care  
**\$1,000**

Children's Law Center  
of Minnesota  
**\$5,000**

Community Mediation  
and Restorative Services  
**\$7,400**

Conflict Resolution Center  
**\$6,000**

Discapitados Abriendose  
Caminos  
**\$10,000**

Division of Indian Work  
**\$5,000**

Domestic Abuse Project  
**\$7,000**

Global Rights for Women  
**\$3,000**

HOME Line  
**\$5,000**

Immigrant Law Center  
of Minnesota  
**\$5,000**

JustUs Health  
**\$5,000**

Lawyers Concerned  
for Lawyers  
**\$5,000**

LegalCORPS  
**\$7,500**

Legal Rights Center  
**\$7,500**

Loan Repayment Assistance  
Program of Minnesota  
**\$4,500**

Minnesota Assistance  
Council for Veterans  
**\$5,000**

Minnesota Elder Justice  
Center  
**\$5,000**

Minnesota Justice Foundation  
**\$5,000**

Minnesota Wills for Heroes  
**\$1,500**

Missions Inc. Program  
**\$7,500**

Seward Longfellow Restorative  
Justice Partnership  
**\$10,000**

Sojourner Project  
**\$7,500**

Standpoint  
**\$10,000**

## SERVING THE COMMUNITY

The Hennepin County Bar Foundation strives to meet a variety of unmet legal needs in Hennepin County and recognizes value in providing services for different communities. We work to choose grantees with a wide range of targeted services in order to diversify our support.

**11,705**



**WOMEN**

**10,275**



**PEOPLE  
OF COLOR**

**1,358**



**IMMIGRANTS**

**517**



**LGBTQ**

**1,619**



**DISABLED**

**1,165**



**VETERANS**

**5,836**



**CHILDREN**

HELP FUND LEGAL SERVICES IN OUR COMMUNITY, GO TO [MNBAR.ORG/HCBFDONATE](https://mnbar.org/hcbfdonate)

# 2019 TEE IT UP FOR JUSTICE



For golfers and cyclists, there are few better days than sunny fall afternoons. Going out with more than 100 other friends and colleagues, the experience becomes that much better. Add in an evening barbecue, beautiful vistas of the Mississippi River valley and downtown Minneapolis, and the ability to raise more than \$30,000 for a good cause, and you have the **2019 Tee It Up for Justice** and **Pedal for Justice**.

Tee it Up for Justice is one of two major fundraisers for the Hennepin County Bar Foundation (HCBF), the charitable-giving arm of the HCBA. Accompanied by the second-annual Pedal for Justice bike ride, this event allows HCBA members and supporters to gather, connect, and support the work of the HCBF. Proceeds support the Foundation's mission of "promoting access to justice for the people of Hennepin County."

The HCBF is proud to announce that this year's event was the most successful year in the event's history. With more than 100 golfers and cyclists, we raised over \$30,000, more than doubling our fundraising total from just four years ago. None of this would be possible without your participation and the support of our wonderful sponsors.

The HCBF Golf Committee would like to give a special thank you to Tournament Sponsor, Heimerl & Lammers. Mike Lammers and his firm are consummate supporters of the HCBF, and their sponsorship was the largest event sponsorship received to date. The committee would also like to thank Retired Judge Mickey Greenberg, who used his power of persuasion, and golfers' propensity to hit errant shots, to single-handedly raise over \$1,200. Finally, we would like to thank the bar association staff, and all our volunteers who helped make the day possible.

The committee is already planning next year's event, and we hope to see all of you next fall, when we look to continue setting new records in our effort to ensure equal access to justice for all.

**CORY OLSON**  
2019 Golf Committee Chair

## Thank You Golf Classic Committee

Susan Aase, Jeff Baill, Bruce Candlin, Joe Dixon, Dave Forro, Mike Lammers, Allison Plunkett, Jeff Thone, Eric Weisenburger

## Thank You to Our Additional Supporters

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## THANK YOU SPONSORS

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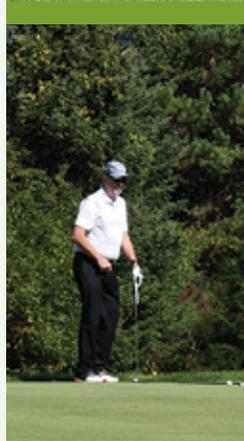
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# 50 Years of Minnesota Law

by Fred L. Morrison



Editor's note: In honor of the HCBA's 100th anniversary, THL wanted to highlight stalwarts of the local legal community. Professor Morrison has taught at the University of Minnesota Law School for 50 years. We're happy to share Professor Fred Morrison's lecture from September 16, where he talked about changes in the law over the last 50 years.

Half a century ago, on September 16, 1969, I joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota Law School. I want to reflect on my experiences in those 50 years, and on how the law, the practice of law and legal education have changed over that period. It has been an exciting ride!

I owe my appointment here at Minnesota to William B. Lockhart, who was then dean of the Law School. He had tried to hire me two years earlier, but we couldn't schedule a necessary interview within the time that I had to make a decision on an offer that the University of Iowa had already given me. I was a very late entry into the law teaching market, and had only that one interview, which had resulted in an offer with only a short period to decide. By the time Bill Lockhart called there wasn't enough time to arrange an interview at Minnesota before that offer expired. I told him about that offer, and my lack of any fallback option. He agreed that in the circumstances I should take the other job, but closed the conversation by saying that he would call back in two years. Two years later—to the day—my telephone at Iowa City rang, and he asked if I would come north for a visit.

Minnesota has always had a number of advantages—a well-respected faculty, a strong national reputation, one of the best law libraries in the nation, a rich cultural life, a major metropolitan area, a state capitol in the metro area, and a more international atmosphere. I was honored to be invited here, and happy when I was able to stay. At the end of my second year here, a colleague's wife played matchmaker and introduced me to my future wife, Charlotte. We soon settled down and became part of the community here.

## The Law School and the Students

In 1969, the Law School, like the rest of the University of Minnesota, operated on a quarter system. School didn't start until late in September and continued until mid-June. In that first year here, 1969-70, I taught Torts, Legal Process and International Law. The next year, I dropped the Torts course and added Constitutional Law. Those courses have been the core of my assigned teaching for the past 49 years: Constitutional Law, International Law, some seminar related to one or the other of them, and then occasionally another course that was urgently needed that year.

The Law School was then located in an overcrowded Fraser Hall on the East Bank. It was essentially self-contained. There were only 29 members of the faculty. Our students rarely took courses in other departments. Only occasionally did a graduate student from another department

enroll in one of our offerings. There were very few women in the student body, as I recall there were fewer than 10 of them in an entering class of 250! More than 80 percent of the students were Minnesota residents. There were usually no foreign students at all. Why would a foreigner want to learn American law?

The Law School moved to the West Bank about a decade later, thanks to the efforts of Bill Lockhart, Bob Stein, and Carl Auerbach, and the financial and political support of many alumni. Indeed, we have been in the new building, now called Mondale Hall, nearly 40 years.

Today we remain one of the top public law schools in the country. We still seek to admit about 250 students each year, but more than half of them are women. But some things are different. There are nearly 60 faculty members. We have more than 60 foreign students in residence, many seeking a formal LL.M. degree; others on semester exchanges with our partner schools in eight foreign countries and from elsewhere. We continue to struggle to attract students of color.

Before I write about the changes that have occurred over the past half century, I want to relate a story from my second year here.

Each year the federal judges in each circuit meet in a "circuit conference" to discuss administrative aspects of adjudication, budgetary needs of the courts, and other administrative matters. The conference invites local law schools and bar association officers to attend. In 1970, Bill Lockhart would normally have gone to that event, but other business kept him away. He asked me to attend in his place. The honored guest at that occasion was Harry Blackmun, who had been appointed to the Supreme Court only a few months earlier. At the beginning of the conference there was a reception to congratulate Blackmun. I went through the receiving line, wearing a name tag that identified me as a professor from the University of Minnesota Law School. We shook hands, he looked at my name tag, and asked me what I taught. I told him "Constitutional Law." He immediately replied, "That's too bad!" Taken aback, I asked him why he said that, and he responded that he had taught Wills and Trusts at the U of M for two or three years in the late 1940s. The university had asked him and other distinguished junior lawyers to teach the additional sections that were necessary to accommodate the GIs who were returning from the Second World War. He told me that he knew that he could reuse his lecture notes from one year to the next, but he also knew from his recent experience at the Supreme Court that I would need to revise my presentation of Constitutional Law every year.

Harry Blackmun was right. Much of what I originally learned as a student and much of what I taught as a beginning teacher, is now wrong. Think of *Roe v. Wade*, which Blackmun would decide within the next few years. Think of *Craig v. Boren*, the first of a string of cases that extended strict scrutiny to gender discrimination. Think of other topics, like state taxation of interstate transactions. Constitutional law is growing and changing all of the time.

Indeed, there were also significant changes in the state constitutional law of Minnesota, during this same period. In the early 1970s the Minnesota Legislature created a Constitutional Study Commission, headed by former Gov. Elmer Anderson, to recommend changes to the state's Constitution. With the work of State Senators Jack Davies and Bob Tenneson, Professor Carl Auerbach, the late Diana Murphy, then a law student at the University, and others, it produced, among other changes, a document that had been edited into modern English, and shortened by the elimination of redundant and excessively flowery language. Much of the research work for these changes was done by our Law School students, who were enrolled in a special seminar that I taught.

Today, I want briefly to discuss three things. First, the changes in the law itself over that half century; second, changes in the practice of law; and third, changes in legal education.

## The Law

Let me start with changes in the law. The law I originally learned was heavily dependent on "rules" or "principles" that were handed down through judicial precedents. For example, when I was studying law, the main control on environmental harms was the law of nuisance. My neighbor had a right to use his property, but not a right to emit unreasonable odors, smoke, or other noxious vapors. One author defines a nuisance as a situation where the tortfeasor is "deemed to be responsible for an act indirectly causing physical injury to land or substantially interfering with the use or enjoyment of land..." There is no hard and fast standard there; much is dependent on whether the fact-finder thinks that the actions of the defendant are "reasonable."

Today we have abandoned that approach. Increasingly we are not asking the question of reasonableness, but rather specifying in absolute terms the extent to which we will permit pollution. We now use terms like "parts per million" to measure water pollution or "decibels" to measure the offensiveness of noise, and other similar scientific terms. The law tries to move from the subjective to the objective measure.



The Law School has been at Mondale Hall for nearly 40 years.

Look at how that has affected the state statutes. When I came to the University in 1969, I asked that a copy of the *Minnesota Statutes* be placed in my office. All of the general state statutes (together with an index) were contained in only four volumes! Today, we have the 2018 statute book—15 volumes. Our quantity of state law has increased by a factor of nearly four.

But that isn't all. There were no published administrative rules in 1969. Such rules existed, but there was no central repository for them. You could sometimes get mimeographed copies by going to the agency and asking nicely. Today there are 12 additional volumes of Minnesota Administrative Rules, plus an updating supplement. So we now have a total of 27 volumes of legally enforceable state laws and rules; we had only four of them when I started teaching.

At the federal level it is fairly common now to have federal laws that run to several hundred pages. Massive quantities of federal regulatory law now appear in the *Federal Register* every day. What we are seeing is a shift in the paradigm of law from what is called "rational" decision-making, thinking that requires the judge or agency to evaluate each situation in light of the surrounding facts and to make a subjective decision of whether that is reasonable or not, to a system of "cognitive" thinking, in which the judge or agency simply applies relatively fixed definitions (usually in measurable terms). Rather than asking whether the emissions are "reasonable," the modern judge must ask whether they exceed a fixed number of parts per million or the like.

How and why did this change come about? Fifty years ago we accepted a test of "reasonableness"

because the practicing bar (and the judges) were a relatively homogenous group of people. Like the classes I met when I first started teaching, they came from the same stratum of society, had similar educational backgrounds, and would be almost unanimous in reaching the same set of conclusions if asked "What a reasonable person would do in these circumstances." Today, with the recognition and empowerment of a much broader slice of society, there might be a broader range of responses to that same question. So the careful legislator or administrator now drafts the law, or regulation make the rules much more specific. That gives us thicker books of laws and regulations, but it also provides more precision in addressing the underlying questions. It forces us to identify standards in ways that are not subject to the unarticulated preconceptions of decision-makers, but rather on objective measures.

### The Practice of Law

That change in how we draft law has also deeply affected the practice of law. When I started to teach here half a century ago, the practice of law was primarily delivered by solo practitioners or by firms with no more than three or four lawyers. There was only a handful of firms that exceeded ten lawyers in size in all of Minnesota. The biggest "law shops" in Minnesota at that time were the attorney-general's office, the University law faculty, and one or two firms with 20 to 40 lawyers. The University of Minnesota had only one lawyer in the University Attorney's Office. At that time our faculty members were frequently involved with the practicing bar, because our professors could be specialists with a deeper expertise in the legal questions involved than could any individual in ordinary practice.

Law schools, like law firms, have experienced growth, but the growth in firm size has been greater and much more rapid. There was a point at which a reversal of roles occurred. Fifty years ago, I, as a law professor, had the luxury of dealing with only a small segment of the corpus of the law. I could be a "specialist," limiting myself to public law issues—constitutional and international law, but doing so with a greater level of detail than the typical practitioner. Over those 50 years our law school faculty has roughly doubled in size, while the typical large firm has increased in size by a much larger factor. Major national firms now have hundreds of lawyers each. Most of them are experts in smaller and smaller subdivisions of the law.

Technology has accelerated that phenomenon. By consolidating firms in different geographical locations into a common professional organization connected by the Internet, law firms have made it possible for lawyers to sub-specialize the work of the individual lawyer even further.

Today, many of the practitioners with whom I interact have a much more detailed view of a much more limited range of issues than I have. I was once valued as a specialist; I am now valued as a generalist.

### Legal Education

When I joined the faculty, the first year curriculum consisted of Contracts, Property, Torts, Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, plus a course called "Legal Process" that gave an introduction to legislation and regulatory agencies. Today, the first year curriculum consists of Contracts, Property, Torts, Civil Procedure, Criminal Law and Constitutional Law plus a course called "Legislation and Regulation." No, the Curriculum Committee has not been asleep! Fifty years ago, most of those courses were year-long, with a terrifying exam on all of them sometime in late June. They are now more intensive one-semester offerings. Some of their material has spawned second- and third-year courses that explore their complexities in greater detail.

One big change in legal education has been its opening to groups that were effectively excluded half a century ago. When I started teaching fewer than 5 percent of the class were women; today, 50 years later, they are a majority of the entering class. We have been less successful in attracting students from minority groups, but, even there, there is increased representation of those groups today.

Several things have, however, changed even more dramatically.

One of those is clinical education. Fifty years ago, our clinical education faculty consisted of two non-tenure track professors who supervised clinical education, largely in Municipal Court proceedings. Today, we have a much more extensive list of clinical offerings, including the Center for New Americans, dealing with immigration issues, a Tax Clinic, Consumer Credit Clinic, and many others. In part this again represents the growing specialization in the practice of law that I mentioned above. In part it reflects the growing demand for such instruction from students in the Law School.

Another change is the internationalization of legal education. When I came, there were no international students. Law was seen as something that, unlike chemistry or engineering, was inherently limited to domestic enrollment. We had a program granting a "Master of Arts in American Law" for foreign students, but rarely enrolled even one such foreign student. Over the past 25 years, we have grown an extensive program, now with more than 60 foreign students in our student body each year. Many of those are persons who are graduates of foreign law schools who spend a year in our LL.M. program, learning American approaches to legal questions. Others are exchange students with our exchange partners at law schools in eight other countries. A few come here seeking S.J.D. degrees, legal education's equivalent of a Ph.D., so that they may teach in their home countries.

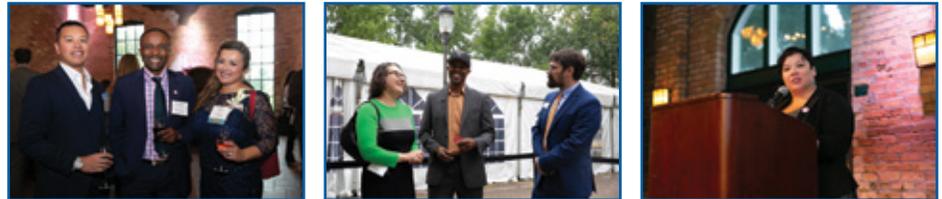
Another great change has been the incorporation into the faculty of individuals with advanced degrees in other fields. When I joined the faculty, I was our only Ph.D., and my graduate degree was in a relatively closely related field, political science. Today about a quarter of our faculty have doctorates in many other fields. That contributes to the depth of our research and our ability to cross fertilize our research with methods and insights from other fields.

I should add one further observation. After teaching for about a decade, I came to realize that I was missing something—practice experience. I took leave for one year to practice at the Popham Haik Schnobrich Kaufman & Doty firm where I provided legal advice to a variety of clients, both public and private. That was followed by a year as the Counselor of International Law at the U.S. State Department, where I became involved in cases before the International Court of Justice and in the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal. Both of these leaves gave me greater insights into the law that I was teaching.

Teaching was, however, my calling. I am pleased to have been a mentor to so many young people who have become successful lawyers.



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## New Lawyers Spotlight: What are your best or worst habits?



### Amy Burroughs

Mack & Santana Law Offices

My worst habit is being on my phone while I am trying to fall asleep. Every month I make it my goal to put it across the room when I go to bed, but it has a mind of its own.

My best habit is I take the time before I leave work or on my commute home to make a list of tasks I need to accomplish the next day. I review the

list the next morning on my way to work. This helps me not think about work when I am at home.



### Deena M. Duffy

I feel my best habit, and the one that has served me the most, is that I habitually reach for my phone whenever there is even an inclination that something should go on the calendar. Our shared online family calendar is detailed to a fault. The minute we are even considering attending an event I add a color-coded place holder in the calendar, often followed by a reminder for a few days or weeks prior to the event to confirm we're

still attending. Even menial tasks and reminders, such as a notifications to myself or my husband to return a purchase later in the day or remembering to bring something to work the next morning, is placed on the calendar.

As a new Minnesota resident about to experience my second full winter here in the "Frigid North," I have found that during the winter I have a bad habit of coming home from work and immediately huddling under a big warm blanket. To many this may seem ideal, but last winter I found that this routine, though comfortable and easy to fall into, meant that I missed out on much of the fun and beauty this state has to offer. This year, I'm looking forward to ice skating, snowmobiling, attending a few winter carnivals, and just generally spending more time outdoors.

### Wendy Carlson

Juris Doctor Candidate  
Mitchell Hamline School of Law



My best work habit is keeping a very detailed planner and daily checklist. In order to avoid the feeling that I've missed something, I've gotten into the habit of writing everything down right away. I also have a good habit of saying "no" when I don't have the capacity to take on something new. This is a habit I developed during my first year of law school as I quickly learned that I could not agree to everything. In my personal life, my best habits consist of drinking lots of water, remembering to water my plants, and always turning off the lights when I leave a room. My worst habits are cracking my knuckles, procrastinating, and leaving the kitchen cupboards open.

### Joseph R. Richie

Anthony Ostlund Baer & Louwagie



When I was fresh out of law school, a partner at my firm told me never to start writing a brief until I had an outline with every point heading written out, and then to set deadlines for each section, leaving plenty of time for revisions before filing. One of my worst habits is occasionally thinking I can ignore that advice.

### Seth Zawila

Robins Kaplan



Best Habit: Getting into work early when my schedule is clear.

Worst Habit: Never bringing my umbrella when it actually rains.



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# PROFILES *in* PRACTICE

*Photos by Sarah Mayer*

# AMRAN FARAH



**I**t's rare to meet an optimistic attorney. Most are known for, and indeed succeed by, worrying about everything that could go wrong and foreseeing every calamity.

Amran Farah is not like most attorneys. "I never really get stressed out," she laughed during our recent interview.

Which is not to say that Farah takes her work lightly. She's a consummate go-getter who loathes making excuses for herself. In fact, she graduated from Hamline University School of Law six years ago, but she still remembers her worst grade: either a B+ or an A-. "My father used to say, when I got anything less than an A, 'So, do you have a secret family that you're

supporting? What are you spending all your time on if you're not doing homework? Do you have a job we don't know about?"

Although her parents instilled in her a strong work ethic and dedication to excellence, they weren't always on board with Farah's decision to go to law school. Initially she was encouraged

to go into medicine, but a fear of needles and blood, combined with a fortuitous conversation with a philosophy professor at St. Thomas, pushed her toward the law. The professor explained that legal reasoning is like mathematics with words. Farah, who loves math, was hooked.

Farah's "can do" attitude has helped her immensely in her legal career. Studying for the bar is difficult for any recent law school graduate; Farah did it while clerking for Hennepin County Judge Pamela Anderson and fasting for Ramadan. This meant that she sat for the bar—and passed—without eating after 4 a.m. and without breakfast or lunch.

Besides her indefatigable industriousness, Farah's parents also taught her Pan-African philosophy and pride in her heritage. As a former member of the Black Law Students Association and the current president of the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers, Farah is proud of her black identity. But Farah admits that being a member of an underrepresented group can feel lonely. "I might go weeks, if not months without seeing another Somali attorney," Farah said.

Nevertheless, she believes that being comfortable with uncomfortable situations makes people better attorneys. "I think people should take a month and go somewhere else in the world," she explained. "You can learn that there's another world, where people have different cultural experiences, different languages, different ways of doing things." If you are more comfortable embracing that, she said, you are more comfortable with clients, which puts them at ease.

Conversely, attorneys who have not been exposed to other cultures can have a negative impact on the entire firm. "If people are in a place where others don't look like them, and



**"What happens tomorrow depends on tomorrow. I can turn it all around."**

they get uncomfortable, it makes the whole situation uncomfortable," she said. Client relationships, and opportunities for a strong team, can suffer. "If a partner's not comfortable with you being in their space, they're less likely to give you opportunities." Instead, attorneys should seek out situations where they are out of their comfort zone—where they are surrounded by people who speak, act, look, or believe differently from them. Successful attorneys can adapt and adjust to clients' backgrounds with respect and tact and select the best associate for the job regardless of personal feelings. In Farah's view, this takes deliberate exposure to situations where you are the minority.

Despite her impressive resume, Farah doesn't live exclusively for her work. She loves travelling (Barcelona is a recent favorite), bad jokes, and reality TV for relaxation. She finds meaning in

creativity, spending time with people, and doing work that makes a difference in the lives of others.

Farah's father and mother, a math teacher and community health organizer respectively, taught her that she could do anything. "My parents would never let me think 'Oh, I can't do this,'" she said. She grew tired of teachers' lowered expectations in grade school and recalls her frustration when a substitute teacher assumed she couldn't read very well. In Farah's eyes, all the substitute saw was an African, Muslim, immigrant girl with a scarf. In reality, Farah had placed in the advanced reading section, could speak two languages, and could read and write in a third.

It's this belief in herself and her own self-determination that fuels Farah's optimism. "I feel like stuff is always going to happen," she said. "So you just have to move on. My dad would say, 'Are you dead? Okay then, as long as you're not dead, you can fix anything. You can re-do anything.' And so, even if I had a hard day at work, tomorrow is a new day. What happens tomorrow depends on tomorrow. I can turn it all around."



**Nora Huxtable**

[nora.huxtable@gmail.com](mailto:nora.huxtable@gmail.com)

Ms. Huxtable graduated from the University of St. Thomas School of Law in May. A journalism major and former on-air host on Classical MPR, she now works at Smith Law as an associate, as well as an assistant public defender in the Minnesota Sixth Judicial District in Grand Marais. In her spare time, she volunteers with the local radio station and Cook County Search and Rescue.

# CHRISTOPHER FOWLKES

Christopher Fowlkes is a seasoned attorney and litigation partner at Barnes & Thornburg in Minneapolis. When Fowlkes is not hard at work, he is on the sidelines of one of his three kids' sports games cheering at the top of his lungs. Fowlkes lives by the principal "work hard, and play just as hard."

Fowlkes hails from Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he grew up with his mother, father, and three siblings. His mom was a public school teacher and his father was an entrepreneur. Growing up, Fowlkes knew he was indebted to his parents and family members, who grew up in the deep South during times of overt racism, and he was motivated to work hard and never let them down. Fowlkes and his wife Melissa have been married for almost 20 years and lead a legacy with their three kids: Myla (15), Jackson (13), and Shiloh (10). Although Fowlkes is deeply involved with his children's sports, there is a family understanding that academics is 'Number One.' All of his children are near straight-A students.

Fowlkes' interest in law was first sparked at the age of five through his father's attorney, who was also African American. They commonly referred to him as "Mr. Drummond"—a reference to the millionaire character from the sitcom *Diff'rent Strokes*. His father's Mr. Drummond had graduated from Harvard Law School, had a commanding presence, dressed impeccably, and occasionally took meetings in his limousine talking on the car phone. If there was one thing Fowlkes knew, it was that his dad looked up to Mr. Drummond, so he did the same. The image of an African American man who became successful by helping people was a testament of his dad's teachings that if you have determination and work ethic, you will be successful.

From a young age, Fowlkes played football, which continued until the end of his first year in law school. He was a star football player at Brown Deer High School, and he was inducted into the school's hall of fame in 2017. In college, Fowlkes was widely known on



**"Nobody can stop you from working hard."**

campus as "Big Train," or "No. 79" because he was a starting offensive tackle for the Minnesota Gophers. While excelling academically as a philosophy major and being a star DI athlete, Fowlkes worked in the mailroom at a national law firm. Fowlkes did not just see his job in the mailroom as a way to make money but used the opportunity and connections to decide whether he wanted to follow in Mr. Drummond's footsteps. Fowlkes asked attorneys to allow him to sit in on depositions and hearings and was eventually invited to observe client meetings. It was not long before Fowlkes fell in love with the thought of practicing law.

In 1995, Fowlkes enrolled at the University of Minnesota Law School while still starting for the Gophers football team. He would begin his day with workouts and film study at 5 a.m., wrapping up with just enough time to make it across campus to the law school for his first class at 8:30 a.m. After a full day of class, Fowlkes attended evening practices and caught up on his playbook with his team before going home to read and prepare for class. "It was one of the hardest things I have ever done, but it was something I took tremendous pride in. And I owed it to myself and my family to do both; and to do both well," Fowlkes said. At the end of his first semester Fowlkes had both excelled in law school and concluded a successful college football career. For the first time, Fowlkes' only obligation was focusing on school. He used his spare time to build relationships. Less than a month later he was back at the law firm for which he had worked as a mail carrier, except now he was a law clerk. Fowlkes continued clerking throughout the duration of law school and graduated in 1998 from the University of Minnesota.

Fowlkes began practicing at a small law firm but after three years moved to Bowman & Brooke to handle complex products liability and personal injury cases. In 2016, Fowlkes joined Barnes & Thornburg and soon after became the hiring partner for the Minneapolis office. Fowlkes is committed to diversity and inclusion, with the emphasis on inclusion. He continues to highlight the importance of a workplace of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ideas.



Fowlkes surrounds himself with a network of people who share his principles and values. Whether it is drive and ambition to serve clients or commitment to diversity and inclusion, if he hears about your hard work, Fowlkes will be your ally. Throughout Fowlkes' practice, he mentions a myriad of talented and influential people but makes special mention of Jerry Blackwell and Alan Mills. Blackwell founded the Minnesota

Association of Black Lawyers and Mills became the first African-American partner at Barnes & Thornburg in 1990. Fowlkes mentions Blackwell's inspirational legacy and vast experience, naming Blackwell as one of the most exceptional lawyers he's ever met. Mills and Fowlkes are both litigators and frequently met at conferences and events around the nation. Mills'

dedication to his work, commitment to diversity and inclusion, and overall class founded the beginning of their relationship.

Everyday, Fowlkes finds new ways to inspire other attorneys to join his call to action — giving meaningful opportunities to individuals who are consistently overlooked. Fowlkes continues to be inspired by his mentors and remains dedicated to leaving a legacy reminding everyone, "Nobody can stop you from working hard."



**Joshua Franklin**

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Mr. Franklin is a 3L at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. He was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and graduated from Morehouse College in 2017. Mr. Franklin currently serves as vice chair of the Midwest Region of the National Black Law Students Association and Student Director of the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers.

# NADINE GRAVES

Nadine Graves is living out her passion to advocate for individual and systematic changes in policies that contribute to the criminal justice gap.

Graves' road to her current position as an Assistant Hennepin County Public Defender wound through personal and work experiences that impressed upon her the need to use her skills to make a difference for other people. As a first-generation American, she draws inspiration from her parents. "My parents are from Liberia and just knowing what they went through in order to come to the United States to give my siblings and me a better opportunity, motivates me to continue to strive to do all that I can to make them proud," Graves stated.



Following college, she worked in a series of positions that brought her into contact with people struggling to find a way to overcome barriers created by having a criminal record. Graves worked with at-risk youth, advocated for families seeking to reunite after traumatic experiences, assisted low-income adults in trying to find work, and advocated for "Ban the Box" legislation and reform of expungement laws. Graves states, "Prior to law school I worked in programs helping individuals recently released from prison try to get employment opportunities and attain self-sufficiency. Many complained about their lack of knowledge as to how their criminal records were going to impact their ability to get jobs and housing." After seven years of hard work, she realized that she needed a law degree if she was going to make the kind of impact she was looking for.

Graves' years at Mitchell Hamline reflect her focus on the criminal justice system: clerking at the Hennepin County Public Defender's Office,

externing at the Council on Crime and Justice, and handling cases through the Mitchell Hamline Child Protection Clinic. Before she graduated, she joined the board of We Are All Criminals, a non-profit that seeks to inspire empathy and ignite social change through personal stories of crime, privilege, justice, and injustice. Graves is an advocate for second chances, especially since she has received some herself after making some mistakes in her youth that landed her in the same system she now fights to change from within. In fact, she states that if she were not a lawyer, she would have started an organization that equipped formerly incarcerated people with tools and resources needed for entrepreneurship since it is still an uphill battle to secure employment when you have a criminal record.

As a public defender, Graves represents adults charged with misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors including assaults and DWI cases. Passionate about criminal justice reform, Graves is mindful of advising her clients not only on the present case at hand but on the future ramifications. Graves states, "For me one of the biggest things I pay attention to with clients is collateral consequences. In my role I am able to help make sure that however the outcome is for my client, they are avoiding the most collateral consequences." For example, Graves is mindful of the fact that both present and potential future employment for her clients can be impacted by the results of their criminal cases. Therefore, Graves discusses with her clients how their present case will not just affect their current situation but likely their future as well. Graves makes sure her clients understand the importance of either negotiating or litigating in order to ensure the best results.

**"In my role I am able to help make sure that however the outcome is for my client, they are avoiding the most collateral consequences."**

Graves notes that her favorite part of the job is getting favorable outcomes for her clients, especially when she gets acquittals. Graves loves being a fighter for her clients. She states, "It can be stressful at times and tiring but I love getting the affirmation from my clients when they know that I have been fighting hard for them." She enjoys trial work and, as a person who is highly social, she enjoys voir dire and the storytelling aspects of trials. Graves credits improv classes she attended when she was young with helping her be able to move quickly and adjust during trial. There are cases in which negotiating a settlement permits Graves' client to avoid the most collateral consequences. However, for



other cases it is necessary for the case to be tried to hold the State to their burden as well give her clients the opportunity to have their stories told. Graves is willing to stand up for her clients and take cases to trial to help the client be in the best position to avoid consequences in the present and the future.

Outside of practicing law, Graves enjoys spending quality time with friends and family. She is also a soccer mom to her two boys who keep her busy and energized. Graves notes that she likes travel which helps her to relax and forget about the stress of work for a while. Graves enjoys music. “If you walk by my office

on a Friday you are likely to hear me listening to some type of music,” Graves said. She is a fan of R&B and hip-hop.

She also loves her job and the people she works with. Graves states, “Hennepin County has the best public defenders and I am blessed to work there.” She notes that the office is full of intelligent and passionate people who push each other to keep fighting the good fight when the days get tough. There are a lot of those days, but there is no other workplace where Graves would rather be.



**Nick Ryan**

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Mr. Ryan is an associate attorney at the Law Office of Eric T. Cooperstein where he represents and consults with lawyers facing legal ethics issues. Previously, he was a law clerk at the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility. He is also the communications director of the HCBA New Lawyers Section.

# VAL JENSEN

Whether she's helping corporate managers develop a diversity plan, coaching employees about implicit bias, or teaching law students about race relations, Val Jensen's message is clear:

"To break down barriers, we need to get to know each other beyond the resume."

As founder of Azon Consulting, Jensen works with businesses, non profits, and government entities, facilitating critical conversations about communicating across differences and what it means to be an ally. "The workplace in Minnesota is changing," Jensen said. "Today we see more immigrants and people of color, plus different religious practices and sexual orientations. As a result, employers have a heightened awareness of issues around diversity and inclusion."

For over 10 years, Jensen served as executive director of Twin Cities Diversity in Practice (TCDIP), an association of law firms and corporate law departments concentrating on recruitment, advancement, and retention of diverse lawyers in Minnesota. During her tenure, TCDIP conducted an attrition study which found two primary reasons why attorneys of color leave law firms: lack of access to meaningful work and social isolation. Jensen works with companies to prevent and address these problems.

It starts with becoming conscious about bias. "We all have affinity bias for similarity," Jensen said. "We prefer people who look like us, with similar backgrounds." Similarities could include, for example, attending the same college or having children. Affinity bias is not conscious exclusion, Jensen explained. "We have busy lives, so we tend to do what's easy and that is being with people of similar backgrounds."



In addition to affinity bias, every organization has unwritten rules. An unwritten rule could be, for example, what constitutes appropriate attire for casual day, or whether being on time for a meeting actually means arriving early. “Who gets told the unwritten rules?” Jensen asked. “Often women and minorities are not included in the teaching of these rules. A lot of business and networking gets done in social settings. If you’re not invited to the social settings, you aren’t building those relationships and you aren’t fully understanding the environment. That can lead to social isolation at work.”

Creating an inclusive workplace does not have to be complicated or elaborate. “Start by being intentional about who you include on work teams and who you invite to coffee or to your cabin,” she suggested.

Jensen stresses that you can learn from someone who doesn’t look like you or seem to have anything in common. “The people that have supported me the most typically have been white men,” said Jensen, who is a black woman. “Your mentor may not look like you but can still have a huge impact.”

The late senator Paul Wellstone was one of Jensen’s mentors. As a professor at Carleton College, Jensen’s alma mater, he nominated her to represent students at a global conference in Washington DC. “I had never even been on a plane before,” she said. “I got to participate in this amazing event, and he made that happen for me.”

Another mentor was retired Supreme Court Justice Alan Page. Jensen worked with Page as a staff attorney implementing the findings of the Minnesota Supreme Court’s Racial Bias Task Force Report. “We were so different — he’s introverted and I’m the complete opposite,” she said. One day, she asked Page why he hired her, given their different personalities. “Justice Page said ‘I’ve found that to be a successful leader, I need people on my team who are not like me, that can fill the gaps,’” she said. “That was a great lesson to me. I try to surround myself with people who have skills or abilities that I may lack.”



**“To break down barriers, we need to get to know each other beyond the resume.”**

Mitchell Hamline vice dean David Prince also had a significant influence on Jensen when she was the law school’s first associate dean for multicultural affairs. “He was my biggest champion,” she said. “He listened to me, advocated for me, and helped me navigate politics. He changed my career trajectory.”

Jensen has stayed involved at Mitchell Hamline, where she teaches Race and the Law. “We’ve created a safe space where students can come with an open mind and a critical eye,” she said. Over the 12 years she has taught the course, she has noticed a change in classroom conversations. “Students today are less hopeful about race relations,” she said. “They are more polarized.”

In addition to teaching, Jensen invests in young people in other ways. She serves on the board of the Washburn Center for Children, a nonprofit

mental health center in Minneapolis. Jensen also supports an orphanage in Africa. She created an association in her parents’ names to improve education and healthcare in grassroots communities. “My parents adopted me and our family had foster kids,” she said. “My parents taught me about giving back.”

In her free time, Jensen enjoys being with her grandchildren. “We like to bake together,” she said. Jensen likes to cook and plans to make a feast at Thanksgiving. “I make food steeped in African-American tradition: collard greens, homemade macaroni and cheese, and sweet potato pie.”

Traveling is another of Jensen’s interests. Her favorite destination is Togo, West Africa, her husband’s birth country. “Africa is about personal connection and building relationships,” she said. “Things are done face-to-face and the pace of life is different.” She hopes to eventually retire to Togo.

But for now, her focus is enhancing diversity and inclusion in Minnesota. “Think about the last person you had coffee with. Was that person different or outside your comfort zone?” Jensen asked. “If not, invite someone to coffee that is different from your normal coffee date. That’s what inclusion is.”



**Lisa Buck**

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Ms. Buck practiced corporate law in Minneapolis and was an adjunct professor at William Mitchell College of Law before a family relocation to the East Coast. Since returning to Minnesota, Buck contributes to the Hennepin Lawyer and serves on the board of the Hennepin County Law Library. She is also a coach of a local high school speech team.



# PHARAOH LEWIS

“**B**e yourself; be authentic!” That is the advice Pharaoh Lewis wants to share with new attorneys. Lewis works in the product liability/mass tort and business litigation practice groups at Nilan Johnson Lewis.

Hailing from New Orleans, Lewis has embraced its heritage rich in flavor and upbeat attitude which drives him in the Minnesota legal scene. Having moved to St. Paul’s historic Rondo neighborhood at age nine, he embraced the culture and heritage within that community as well, and strives to stay in touch with his extended family and to encourage others to do their best.

Notwithstanding the fact he has spent most of his life in Minnesota, Lewis and his family maintain a strong connection to where it all began. “We try to keep a lot of the New Orleans-style family traditions. We try to go back and visit about once a year to stay connected to those roots,” said Lewis. “[New Orleans] is a pretty cool place and culture to come from.”

After graduating from Woodbury High School in 2008, Lewis attended Barry University in Miami, Florida. According to Lewis, Barry was an “eye opening experience in terms of culture” and great weather. In addition to focusing on academics, he found time to learn about the many ethnicities and cultures within the area, and built strong relationships with a diverse group of new friends not only from those areas, but from across the United States. “It was cool to come in contact with lots of other people at the age of 18 and 19,” said Lewis. Upon completion of his studies at Barry University, Lewis received an undergraduate and master’s degree in sports management.

His passion for sports includes a loyal following of the Louisiana State University Tigers, New Orleans Saints, and New Orleans Pelicans—although he does maintain a hometown loyalty to the Minnesota Timberwolves, for whom he worked after college and externed for during law school.

**“I wanted to be an ‘agent of change’ and ultimately to give back to the community in a substantial way.”**



After completing his undergraduate and graduate studies, Lewis attended law school at the University of St. Thomas. “I wanted to be an ‘agent of change’ and ultimately to give back to the community in a substantial way,” said Lewis. After an initial focus purely on sports management, he changed paths toward law school, intrigued by what he could do with a law degree. The main draw was a flexibility and leeway in terms of professional skills and career opportunities.

Lewis finds strength and character from his mother, Verona Mitchell, who moved to Minnesota on her own with four young children. In order to succeed as a lawyer, and serve others, he has become involved in various legal and civic organizations. He describes his law degree as one of the tools within his “toolbox” to offer positive change.

Lewis has seized opportunities made available to him because of his legal education, including clerking for Target’s law department, the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights, Judge Amy Dawson, and Judge Karen Janisch. In addition, closer to his heart, “I have had the opportunity to be involved in the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers and recently worked at a legal clinic sponsored by the city

of Minneapolis’ *Black Business Week*.” Lewis explained, “We helped entrepreneurs of color either review or create a business plan to start their own company. They already have some of the building blocks for their company and just wanted reassurance.”

At this clinic, Lewis provided guidance and free legal advice to up-and-coming enterprisers. “That felt really good, to give back,” said Lewis. “That is part of having the ‘toolbox’ and being an ‘agent for change’ – to offer things you have learned from your legal education or legal practice and offer it to folks who might not have access to it right away.” Lewis continued, “What might take you 30 minutes or an hour or two could be monumental to someone’s outlook on life or their day. It could help them move to the next phase of their plan.”

Mentorship and talking to the younger generation is also important to Lewis. His goal is to expose them to different lifestyles. “This is part of my legacy,” said Lewis, who is looking for more opportunities as he gains experience in years as a lawyer and developing a reputation as a trusted member of the bar and larger community. “I am fortunate enough to have my network, friends, and other contacts.” By keeping in contact with this group, he hopes to stay plugged in.

Lewis has a simple reason that being engaged is important – he wants others to have someone to look up to. This helps explain why he relies on others, mainly his family, as a source of strength through challenging times. He was also recently married. “There are always folks that you can look up to or model yourself after. There is already someone out there that is willing and able to help mentor you.” Lewis concluded, “Do not be afraid to be yourself or to pursue your interests no matter how crazy.”



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Mr. Frederickson is the founder of MSP Compliance Solutions, which is based out of Minneapolis/St. Paul. He has nearly two decades of legal practice experience in the areas of workers’ compensation, personal injury, and Medicare/Medicaid compliance. His passions also include assisting low income persons via pro bono legal representation.

# JOHN MEDEIROS

Only three days after being sworn in to the Minnesota bar, John Medeiros became a partner at the Myers Thompson law firm. He had earned it the hard way. “It was a long road to becoming a lawyer, but a very short road to becoming a partner,” said Medeiros. His journey was anything but traditional.

Medeiros comes from a working-class family from Providence, Rhode Island. His father was a machinist, the first-generation son of parents from the Azores, his mother a homemaker. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Rhode Island in Spanish, English and Latin American Studies with minors in African Studies, Linguistics, and Education. “I have always been interested in learning how others view the world... The fact that we can look at the same thing but in a different perspective fascinates me,” says Medeiros. During college, Medeiros got his first taste of working at a law firm when he landed a job “schlepping files back and forth” for a worker’s compensation firm. He found that job deeply unsatisfying, but appreciated the work ethic of those he worked with. After college, Medeiros found his calling working with a nonprofit in Rhode Island, where he gave legal workshops to immigrant communities and coordinated a staff of six to help immigrants apply for amnesty.

While visiting a childhood friend in Minneapolis in 1994, Medeiros fell in love with the city. He recalls this visit took place in the summertime. Medeiros could see himself living here. He opened the phone book and began to apply for jobs at law firms. While he was sitting in the lobby of one firm waiting for an interview, he picked up a copy of *Who’s Who in Immigration Law*. This book introduced him to Sam Myers and Elizabeth Thompson, two national leaders in corporate immigration law who hired him a week later. Three years later, the three left their existing firm and started the firm of



**“I have always been interested in learning how others view the world... The fact that we can look at the same thing but in a different perspective fascinates me.”**

Myers Thompson, with Medeiros in the role of practice group administrator. In this position, he completed necessary tasks to support the practice, including creating information sheets on policy directives and templates that established consistency in the firm’s work. Over the years, his expertise in immigration law became invaluable.

Medeiros took his first LSAT in 1997 but he decided not to go to law school even before he received his results. He knew he could only go to law school on a part-time basis, and the only option for him at the time was an evening program that required him to take classes four nights a week. At the time, a professor advised him not to rush into law school, and in retrospect, he thinks that was the right decision. “I could not work five days a week and go to school four evenings on top of that. If I had gone to law school in 1997, I would not be a partner today,” said Medeiros.



While building his skills and knowledge at Myers Thompson, Medeiros took a detour to pursue another passion of his: writing. He obtained a Master of Fine Arts, *summa cum laude*, in creative non-fiction and poetry. He has taught writing classes and led writing workshops, and even published a book of poetry while he was in law school. His poetry and non-fiction are widely published, and he is the recipient of dozens of awards, including two Minnesota State Arts Board grants and several national awards. He is currently working on a memoir and promoting an LGBT reading series that he has co-curated for fourteen years. This past May, the Minnesota Historical Society Press published an anthology of the series called *Queer Voices: Poetry, Prose, and Pride*.

While in his early 40s, Medeiros took his second LSAT and enrolled in Hamline University’s weekend program. “Going to school on the weekend was the only way I could do it,” he says. “It was much easier for me to separate my work life from my academic life,” he adds. “And as for my social life, well, I had none!”

Medeiros graduated with honors in 2014. “Law school was quite the adjustment,” says Medeiros. “The first semester of law school was all about learning how to juggle it all. I had a partner. I

had a house. I had a full-time job,” he adds. “But I also knew that once I did this, I had my career laid out for me.” In January of this year, Myers Thompson became Myers Thompson Medeiros.

Medeiros’s clients come in many sizes. He works with small companies that employ as few as three people, as well as companies with offices around the world. As part of his job, he interprets regulations by the Department of Labor, the Immigration Service, and the Department of State — agencies that do not communicate well with each other.

Sitting on Medeiros’s desk are stacks of paper and a picture of his husband, John, along with a number of redrope envelopes. These envelopes contain requests for additional evidence from the Immigration Service, a norm in the life of immigration practitioners these days. “These times are challenging for immigration lawyers,” he says. “There is complete

unpredictability, and the most challenging part of the job is to manage their clients’ expectations,” says Medeiros, “There are no longer any guarantees.”

Nevertheless, Medeiros is a leader in an evolving field of corporate immigration law. To unwind, he does yoga regularly and bowls in a league. He jokes, “Yoga keeps me centered, but bowling reminds me of the benefit of throwing something hard and fast at least once a week.”



**Eder Castillo**

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Mr. Castillo is a first-generation law student from an immigrant family. He graduated from the University of Minnesota and is currently in his third year at the University of St. Thomas School of Law.

# ALLYSON PETERSEN



**W**hat do mid-distance sprinting and an interest in sociology have in common? If you ask Allyson Petersen, a labor and employment litigation attorney at Nilan Johnson Lewis in Minneapolis, both help a person prepare for a career in law. Petersen says her experience as a collegiate athlete and her interest in connecting with people led her to where she is today.

Petersen grew up in a bicultural household in Mound. She has always been naturally drawn to learning about different cultures and perspectives. Upon graduating from high school, Petersen joined her older sister at DePaul University in Chicago. There, she immersed herself in the Windy City, broadening her exposure to different cultures and communities. “I met so many fantastic people while living in Chicago. I loved that

I could visit one neighborhood and feel totally immersed in that community and go to another neighborhood and have a totally different experience,” she recalled. While at DePaul, she studied sociology and business administration—two very different disciplines. She had the opportunity to take legal courses within those areas, which piqued her curiosity in the law, without pigeonholing her into a lock-step progression to law school.

During this time, Petersen developed excellent time management skills—not to mention mental and physical endurance—competing in the 400-meter dash and 800-meter dash for DePaul’s track team. “College track was basically a full-time job in addition to my course work. My experience as a collegiate athlete prepared me for law school and the bar exam,” she said. “There is a certain level of drive that comes with pushing through to the finish line when you don’t think you can go anymore. The skills I learned as a collegiate athlete no doubt helped me in my legal career.”

After college, Petersen began working as an assistant at a boutique plaintiffs’ law firm in downtown Chicago. “I was thinking about law school, but I wasn’t 100 percent sure if that was the right path for me. I wanted to get experience in a law firm to see what it was like,” she explains. “Working in a small law firm helped me to understand the business of being a lawyer and the impact that legal services has on both individuals and businesses.” After spending two years observing court proceedings, drafting pleadings, and working closely with litigators, Petersen went on to law school at William Mitchell College of Law.

During law school, Petersen pursued various public interest clinics and internships. When asked why she chose this track, she stated, “I have always been passionate about working with underserved communities, and I enjoyed using my legal skills to help individuals that could not afford legal representation and are often most vulnerable when defending their rights.” Petersen also spent time as a participant and coach on Mitchell’s Jessup Moot Court and as the vice president of Mitchell’s Black Law Student Association (BLSA). “Jessup Moot Court was so different than anything else I did during law school. It challenged me to be a better advocate and think outside the box to craft legal arguments using only international resources.” When discussing BLSA, Petersen recounted, “BLSA gave me an opportunity to connect with likeminded people, who later became some of my closest friends at law school, and to participate in community service projects throughout the Minneapolis area.”

Following law school, Petersen considered becoming a public defender, but after clerking



**“There is a certain level of drive that comes with pushing through to the finish line when you don’t think you can go anymore.”**

for Judge James A. Cunningham in Anoka County for two years, she decided to pursue a career in the civil sector, although she is committed to representing underprivileged individuals in pro bono matters. “My clerkship was invaluable in allowing me to gain additional perspective from behind the bench and a deeper appreciation for the weight of the law. It was a great experience that helped me figure out what I wanted to do for my career. The calendar rotated every week among family, criminal, civil, probate, and juvenile law, which kept it exciting and helped me narrow down what I wanted to do,” she recalls. “I was able to observe all sorts of attorneys—good and bad—and learn from them while continuing to develop my research and writing skills.”

After her clerkship, Petersen joined Nilan Johnson Lewis. She focuses her practice in labor and employment litigation, and has experience representing companies in products liability and business litigation matters. “I’ve only worked at one law firm, and I don’t see myself working at any other firm,” said Petersen. “This is a firm that truly invests in their attorneys and I feel lucky to have had the opportunities provided to me at NJL thus far. I am constantly challenged and have learned so much as a litigator.”

During her free time, Petersen still enjoys running and being active, though with slightly less intensity than when she competed in college. She and her husband enjoy traveling, especially to Jamaica, where they both have family. “Travel brings me back to my love of sociology. I get so excited exploring new countries. I like to stay

where the locals live and immerse myself in the culture and figure out what makes a city or specific neighborhood unique.” Petersen and her husband also welcomed their first child in September.

Petersen is eager to continue to expand her understanding of different people and places, but she remains rooted. “Minnesota is a funny place. When I left for college, I didn’t think I would come back, but now I am here, settled into my legal career, married, with a little one. This is home!”



**Alice Sherren**

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Ms. Sherren was a litigator in Minneapolis for a decade before joining Minnesota Lawyers Mutual in 2009, where she directs the defense of legal malpractice claims. She is a frequent contributor to legal publications nationwide, and she creates and presents continuing legal education seminars on legal ethics and risk management.

# SARASWATI SINGH

“I love being a prosecutor. It’s an especially exciting time to be one. People are having serious discussions on what it means to be a good, fair, and just prosecutor. And—this is the most exciting part—talk is turning into action. We are beginning to use other tools in our tool belt—treatment courts, diversion, stays of adjudication—to more effectively address low level crimes stemming from addiction, mental health issues, and poverty,” reflects Saraswati Singh, a prosecutor in the adult criminal trial division of the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office.

Singh’s life journey informs her approach as a prosecutor and her enthusiasm for the job. Her path began in New York. She was born in Brooklyn, moved to Queens, and went to high school in the Bronx. Singh explains, “My classmates were of different genders, races, sexualities, religions, and socioeconomic statuses. I didn’t realize how lucky I was to go to integrated public schools until much later in life. It taught me that we are all the same: we all need to eat, want a safe place to sleep, and have the chance to pursue our dreams.”

Singh attended Colgate University in upstate New York. She spent a semester in Washington D.C., where she interned for her hometown senator at the time, Hillary Clinton and where she met Justice Antonin Scalia. This is where she was bitten by the public service bug.

After college, Singh worked for then-senator Joe Biden, heading to the Midwest for the first time for the Iowa caucuses. She still remembers feeling excited when she saw the Mississippi River and a bald eagle nearby. She returned to D.C. to manage a government affairs department but ultimately decided to go to law school so that she could develop skills to be a more effective advocate.

Singh eventually moved to Minnesota to attend the University of Minnesota Law School. Her original plan was to go back to D.C. after completing her degree but, “I fell in love with



**“I’ve learned as a prosecutor what one can learn anywhere  
—it’s about people. You stand out when you care.”**



Minnesota. The people are kind and supportive, the Twin Cities are lovely, the Mississippi River is beautiful, and nature is just a short walk away. I’m so happy to be here. It feels like home. Prince was right...the cold keeps the bad people out.”

Singh worked on Elena Kagan’s confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of a Senator on the Judiciary Committee while in law school. One day, the staff recommended that she attend an American Constitution Society (ACS) event and report back. The ACS promotes principles that have driven Singh’s legal career so far, namely that “the law should be a force to improve the lives of all people.” It is no wonder Singh has been co-president of the ACS Minneapolis-St. Paul Lawyer Chapter three years in a row.

ACS gave Singh the opportunity to learn from people across the ideological spectrum on topics that usually have no easy answers. Through ACS she also met Chief Judge John Tunheim, for whom she later externed, and Ramsey County Attorney Jon Choi, who hired her in early 2018 as an assistant county attorney. In between, she worked for U.S. District Court Judge Susan R. Nelson, as a law clerk in Hennepin County, and for the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office. During these experiences, Singh observed the inequities of the criminal justice system.

“One day on a felony docket [as a law clerk], I looked around the courtroom and noticed that the only minorities were the defendant, and me. Everyone else was white. Then the defendant

glanced over at me, and I suddenly realized what was happening. It is one thing to read about disparities in law school but it’s another to actually see and feel it in the real world.” Singh pondered, “The defendants here look more like my high school classmates in New York, but my former classmates are now doctors and work for NASA.”

Singh credits the Hennepin County Bar Association as one of the key factors to her professional growth. “I joined right after being admitted to the bar. It was a place where I saw people like me at every step of the way, including what professional life could be like 40 years down the road. There are judges to partners at law firms to public servants in the largest legal hub in Minnesota. They are supportive and interested in my success as an attorney. I stay involved to keep seeing the friendly faces, to help other attorneys rise in the profession, and to keep my thumb on the pulse in this large legal market.”

As a prosecutor, Singh handles sexual assault, gun possession, and attempted murder cases. Singh describes the team Choi has been building as “incredible attorneys who are also reflective of our community.” Singh fully supports the Office’s efforts to focus on sexual assault, domestic violence, and other violent cases. “These types of cases are tough for many reasons: witness tampering, limited evidence, disbelief that someone who looks nice and seems friendly in public could do something so terrible.” Singh believes “It’s important that we pursue

cases where victims are women, people of color, LGBTQ, or belong to a different religion. Those cases are particularly difficult because of implicit bias against these types of victims. But prosecutors need to show Minnesotans that we should all care, regardless of whether one feels they connect with a victim, because violent behavior is unacceptable in a civilized society.”

Singh’s advice to newer lawyers is to follow their hearts. Every time Singh has followed her heart and been her authentic self, it has paid off in bigger ways than she could have imagined. “I’ve learned as a prosecutor what one can learn anywhere—it’s about people. You stand out when you care.”



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Mr. Chaudhary is an immigration attorney in Minneapolis, specializing in criminal defense of noncitizens and complex immigration circumstances. He lectures frequently on immigration topics and writes an immigration blog at [immigrationqa.com](http://immigrationqa.com). He also offers consultations to attorneys representing noncitizens in any matter.

# SHERI STEWART

“I am living my dream right now. I told my friends and family 10-12 years ago that I was going to go to law school and be an attorney. And those words have come to life, I want to live it to the fullest.”

Stewart is a proud New Yorker who loves the city she was raised in. She loves the energy and excitement that New York City provides. Stewart moved to Minnesota for law school and has enjoyed the opportunities and relationships she has here. She is currently an attorney at Bassford Remele, where her practice includes construction, employment, and general liability law and litigation. Stewart graduated from Wellesley College in 2009 with a degree in Philosophy and a minor in Africana Studies. While at Wellesley she was the founder and president of the Wellesley Women of Color Pre-Law Society. Stewart graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School in 2017.

She credits her family for giving her the support in her path to becoming an attorney. “My family were always my champions. They always believed in me,” Stewart said. In particular, Stewart’s mom was and still is a role model and hero to Stewart. She states, “My mom is the reason that I am here. Not just because of the fact that she had me, but because she was relentlessly supportive of me every step of the way.”

Stewart reflects that her childhood in New York inspired her to dream big. She states, “I come from a very humble family that has given me strong values about what it means to create the life you want to live.” Stewart believed in herself and knew that education would assist her in creating the life she wanted. Her family always stressed the importance and power of education.

Stewart has lived her life authentically and she continues to be authentic and intentional as she starts her career as a lawyer. Stewart notes, “Now that I am in my first year of practice, there are moments that I try and journal to recall and remember how I felt initially and how I feel like I am getting more accustomed to the motions.”



**“If you do not share enough of you, people cannot relate to you, they cannot understand or empathize with you.”**

She also understands that her clients and even other attorneys look to people they can relate to and she has discovered that being vulnerable and up-front helps establish meaningful relationships. Stewart also believes that these personal relationships built on honesty help her lead a successful life. “There are so many people that do not want to be vulnerable because they feel like if they do show who they are people will take advantage of them. But I have learned that with success there is a necessity to be vulnerable because that is how people identify with you.” Stewart said. “If you do not share enough of you, people cannot relate to you, they cannot understand or empathize with you.”

Stewart is a people-person and full of energy. She also knows that she is most successful when she brings her full, true, energetic self to the table. Stewart stated “I am very cognizant and receptive to energy, and I use these external abilities to connect with others. I have been told that “I have a big personality”. This is who I am, if I try to change it, I feel that people will know that I am not being genuine.”

Stewart loves practicing law, especially the creative part of crafting arguments while practicing law. “When I think about the advocacy part, and the way I can use what I have learned from the rule of law and then be creative with an argument is always intriguing to me.” Or to be able to just say “Hey I am going to assert a point of view for this argument and it is going to be contested, well, let’s go,” Stewart said.

She also appreciates the variety of the practice of law. Stewart stated, “What is so beautiful about the law is that there are so many different perspectives and nuances that people can bring their authentic self to it.” Stewart also notes for her that “it is not about the day-to-day practical, it is the big picture that keeps me engaged.”

Stewart’s authenticity is evidenced by her ability to learn from small interactions with strangers. For example, in her first year of law school Stewart met a child at a Minnesota Association for Black Lawyers (MABL) event. Stewart states, “The kid was about 6 or 7 years old. And he was

asking about how law school was. And I told him it was a lot of work and that I was busy all the time, studying a lot. I told him that even if I get tired, I have to keep going. I have to take it one step at a time. And this kid, he sounded like he was 30 years old, responded ‘Well, I am telling you, if I ever needed someone to represent me, if I needed legal help or did something wrong, I wouldn’t want a lawyer to just give up. I need to know that you are ready to stand the test of

time.” Stewart admits that this interaction has stayed with her and has helped her keep perspective on the need to be ready to fight through the struggles of both law school and now legal practice. Stewart states, “If there is anything the law school process and legal practice is about it is: are you willing to fight the fight? Will you stay in it no matter how tough because your

clients are depending on you? And this kid understood that.”

Stewart is also mindful of the need to holistically evaluate people and situations. She notes, “I assess people really quickly; I try myself to not judge. I use the word assess because judging comes with a weight. There is a weight that sometimes you do not have perspective enough to give it the credit. But when you assess, it is based on your five senses.”



**Nick Ryan**

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Mr. Ryan is an associate attorney at the Law Office of Eric T. Cooperstein where he represents and consults with lawyers facing legal ethics issues. Previously, he was a law clerk at the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility. He is also the communications director of the HCBA New Lawyers Section.

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Media appearances can increase organically, as long as you allow yourself to take hold of opportunities to lead and to speak up.

# Making Media Appearances and Public Advocacy as an Attorney

By Sandra Feist

I knew I had “arrived” the day that the executive director of an organization designated as a national hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center directly argued with me about an article on the administration’s use of procedural mischief to achieve its policy goals. It felt cathartic to be having the fight directly, rather than railing at an unreachable foe from the outside. This article is about the How and the Why of stepping out from behind the scenes to make your point to the broader public through media appearances and outlets.

My own path to advocacy through the media began with small steps. I gained comfort with seeing my words and name in print through short articles for professional associations, such as Minnesota Women Lawyers and the MSBA New Lawyers Section’s online publication, Hearsay. I joined the *Hennepin Lawyer* committee as a young lawyer and quickly moved from writing articles to serving as an issue editor, with my own ‘Inside View’ from the editor. Opportunities to grow my media presence expanded as I took on volunteer leadership roles within the local and immigration legal communities. As described below, media appearances can increase organically, as long as you allow yourself to take hold of opportunities to lead and to speak up.

**"Ultimately, I speak up because I feel I have a moral obligation to do so, regardless of the risk of misspeaking and embarrassing myself or of placing myself out in the line of fire during this turbulent interlude where the consequences are truly unpredictable."**



**TOP TIP:** Your tiny little newspaper loves it when local residents submit pithy little opinion pieces. This is a great way to get practice and build your record of publication and outreach as a leader in the community.

### The How

First and foremost, know that the people who the media considers experts just woke up one day and decided they were experts. As lawyers, we are all specialists with expertise and opinions from which the public can benefit. Your opinion matters and is interesting, so don't wonder whether you're out of place in the public eye. Be bold and speak up.

Second, and perhaps my favorite tip: time management! It's exhausting writing articles, scheduling trips to the recording studios to be interviewed, and preparing to be on a panel of intimidating experts on the radio. These activities will consume your schedule and your energy if you let them. So don't. I woke up today and told myself, "I said I'd write this article by the 23rd and it's the 18th. I better get to it!" I scheduled out a chunk of time and pounded it out in that window, focused and efficient. I schedule specific windows of time for smaller advocacy tasks as well, such as reaching out to clients to try and connect them with reporters. Using time wisely is key.

I began my activities in the public eye by writing letters to the editor to local newspapers, such as my New Brighton newspaper, where I submitted an ardent pro-vaccination article to inform my neighbors about the importance of vaccinations. Top tip: Your tiny little newspaper loves it when local residents submit pithy little opinion pieces. This is a great way to get practice and build your record of publication and outreach as a leader in the community. I've also co-authored pieces for local newspapers, which is a way to spread out the time commitment and have a built-in editor to ensure your article is in top shape. One such article was on a technical area of passion of mine – a law called "245(i)" – that I and a friend presented in a punchy, readable format to the general public. Such publications are an efficient use of time and an effective way to build your name as a local expert – not to mention that they are an excellent way to inform the public about topics important to you.

As mentioned above, my advocacy has been facilitated from the beginning by the immigration legal community. Find mentors and resources in your practice area, and in the legal community. Rely on others to help you, then pass it on by mentoring and editing and coaching younger attorneys once you've risen up.

As a last tip: Don't feel that you have to be perfect. Speak your mind. Do your homework and prepare for an interview with your talking points and examples, but don't overthink the

interview once it's over, and don't worry if one or two quotes aren't quite what you hoped. Over time, your confidence will grow, as will your skill. Ultimately, these efforts are worth the time, energy and effort because you will build your reputation, your communication skills, your confidence and your satisfaction with your career.

### The Why

Initially, my goal in reaching out to local media to advocate was encouraged and facilitated by professional associations. The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) actively encourages and provides editorial assistance and services in helping its members to public editorials, letters to the editor and substantive articles in news outlets. The goal from AILA's standpoint is to share its members' expertise with a broader audience. The goal from the members' standpoint is aligned, but with an extra element of establishing a reputation as a thought leader and legal expert.

As my comfort with writing articles and opinions to small and mid-sized newspapers grew, I found myself reaching out to radio reporters and contributing to advocacy groups within professional associations. Through my volunteer leadership roles, I became the point person for local reporters who would reach out to me first when there was an immigration topic in the news. I began to reciprocate, emailing reporters on topics they may not yet have picked up on. I wrote articles on topics near and dear to my heart, practical articles on the state my field of immigration law, and articles on areas of passion within the legal realm but outside my practice. Seeing my name in print over time gave me more confidence and belief that my opinion matters and is valuable to the public forum.

The 2016 election was a watershed moment for me. Suddenly, my gripes about the technical hassles and lack of imagination for immigration policy of the Obama presidency transformed into an omnipresent rage over the all-out war on my clients and my field of law. I transitioned from local advocacy leadership to national leadership through AILA, eager to speak up more loudly, to share my clients' stories when they were too terrified to do so. In particular, while the injustices and heartbreaking desolation of refugees and asylees was gaining attention from the public, the plight and hardship faced by my high-skilled immigrant clients was so technical and complex that the human suffering was often buried beneath layers of complex statistics and charts. I wanted to ensure that the public understood that the war

on immigration was a war on all fronts. Award-winning infectious disease experts, business leaders and accomplished athletes were being targeted with the same extreme hate as the attacks on low-income migrants.

Ultimately, I speak up because I feel I have a moral obligation to do so, regardless of the risk of misspeaking and embarrassing myself or of placing myself out in the line of fire during this turbulent interlude where the consequences are truly unpredictable.

I have found the byproducts of media advocacy to be numerous. The obvious benefit of being interviewed by news outlets is publicity and the growth of my public persona, which has benefited my practice and given an expanding pool of clients confidence in my character and my expertise. One less obvious benefit has been an expansion of my community of peers through joint advocacy. The sense of solidarity and the satisfying planning sessions for messaging and media strategy have connected me to so many talented, passionate attorneys who I would never have met in any other contacts. Another benefit has been the personal growth that has resulted over the past years of consistently challenging myself and getting outside my comfort zone.

One last unexpected consequence of my media appearances has been a sense of being powerful, rather than powerless, in the face of professional challenges that were unimaginable to me in 2001 when I first began working in the field of immigration law. These days, immigration attorneys face ever-increasing odds, and it is easy to feel dejected and hopeless. By speaking up, stridently and passionately, I take some of the power back and wield it on behalf of my clients indirectly.



**Sandra Feist**

[Sfeist@grellfeist.com](mailto:Sfeist@grellfeist.com)

Ms. Feist is a partner at the law firm Grell Feist, where she practices immigration law with an emphasis on employment-based cases. She is the past chair of the MN/Dakotas Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and a current Board Member of the HCBA.



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# Events and Meetings

Visit [www.hcba.org/events](http://www.hcba.org/events) for more information

## NOV 5

### Labor and Employment CLE

Interpreting the Minnesota Wage Theft Law and the Minneapolis Wage Theft Prevention Ordinance  
12 p.m.

## NOV 7

### HCBA CLE

The Law of Presidential Impeachment  
12 p.m.

## NOV 12

### HCBA Board of Directors

12 p.m.

## NOV 13

### Family Law CLE

New Year, New Court Rules  
12 p.m.

## NOV 14

### HCBA Member Social

Joliet Event Space,  
The Marquette Hotel  
5–7 p.m.

## NOV 14

### Writing Workshop for Newer Lawyers

3:30–6 p.m.

## NOV 19

### New Lawyers

### Section Meeting

11:30 a.m.

## NOV 20

### HCBF Board of Directors

12 p.m.

## DECEMBER 10

### HCBA Board of Directors

12 p.m.

## DECEMBER 16

### Landlord-Tenant CLE

Housing Court Referee  
Roundtable: A View  
From the Bench  
12 p.m.

## DECEMBER 17

### New Lawyers

### Section Meeting

11:30 a.m.

## HCBA OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED

November 28-29

December 23-27

January 1

## HONORING LAWYERS WHO PASSED AWAY IN 2019

The HCBA's Bar Memorial Committee requests your assistance in its efforts to memorialize Hennepin County lawyers and judges. Please inform us of any colleagues who have passed away this year who should be memorialized at the 2020 Bar Memorial.

The 2020 Bar Memorial will take place on Friday, May 1, from 9:00–10:00 a.m. at the Thrivent Financial Auditorium in downtown Minneapolis. The Chief Judge of the Fourth Judicial District Court presides over this special session of the court.

Contact Sheila Johnson at [sjohnson@mnbars.org](mailto:sjohnson@mnbars.org) with names of those to be memorialized. If you are interested in serving on the Bar Memorial Committee, we welcome your participation.



**MEDIATOR.**

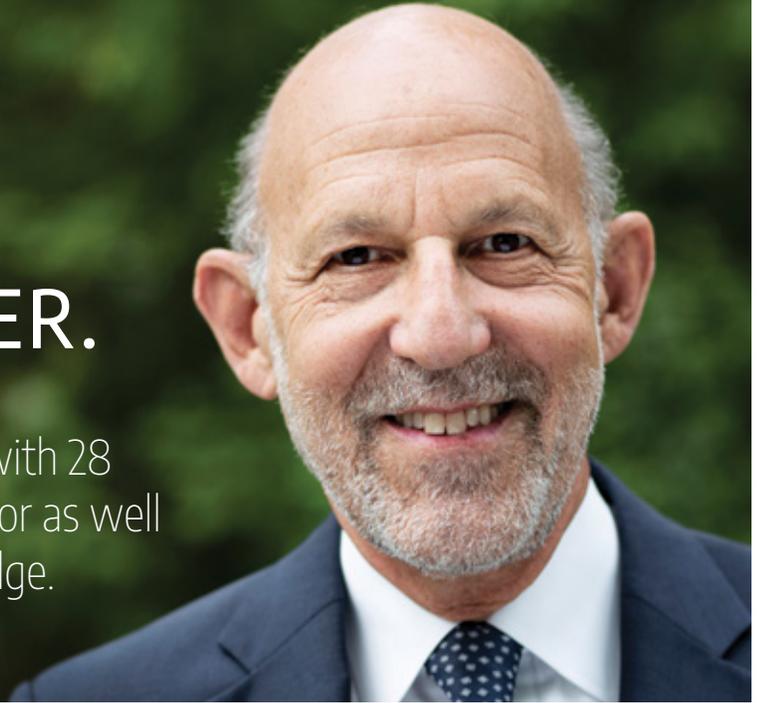


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# Member News

Submit your HCBA member news to [thl@hcba.org](mailto:thl@hcba.org) for consideration.

Anthony Ostlund announces the addition of four new associates: **Joseph Richie**, **Stephanie Knapp**, **Austin Keller** and **William Paterson** to the firm's Business Litigation practice.



**Alexander J. Kim** has joined Greenberg Traurig as a shareholder.

Spencer Fane welcomes **Ryan Crayne** as a partner.



**Lloyd Stern** has joined Henson Efron.



Tuft, Lach, Jarabek & O'Connell announces that **Allyson Kerr** has joined the firm as an associate attorney.



**Stephani Sundry** has joined Christianson & Company as a member of their brokerage team.



**Creig Andreasen** has joined Lommen Abdo as a shareholder in its Minneapolis office.



**Jacob P. Harris** has rejoined Fredrikson & Byron in the Litigation, White Collar & Regulatory Defense and Appellate Groups.



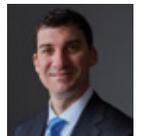
**Zachary S. Pratt** has joined Fredrikson & Byron in the Patents, Intellectual Property and Artificial Intelligence Groups.

**Chantal M. Wilson** has joined Fredrikson & Byron in the Mergers & Acquisitions Group.



Bassford Remele is pleased to announce that **Colin S. Seaborg** and **Molly B. Hough** have become associates of the firm.

**Vince C. Reuter** has been promoted to partner with Eckland & Blando.



**Lara R. Sandberg** has been promoted to special counsel of Eckland & Blando.

**Nathan J. Thompson** has joined Moss & Barnett.



**Joshua A. Hasko** has been elected president of Messerli Kramer.



Gregerson, Rosow, Johnson & Nilan announces that **Lindsey R. Danielson** and **David R. Hackworthy** have joined the firm as associates.

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# 10 QUESTIONS

## Sahr A.M. Brima

Associate, Dorsey

### 1 What's your elevator speech?

I have two of them. The one I say in the elevator, as a vocal clarity and strength technique, before presentations is Marc Antony's monologue in Julius Caesar, Act III, Scene II. (I have a theater background.) My other speech: I'm a problem solver. I use my God-given gifts and legal acumen to resolve complex issues for clients in various industries. If I don't know how to resolve your problem, I most likely know someone who does.

### 2 Why did you decide to go to law school?

I realized becoming the next Denzel Washington was largely a selfish ambition. I also studied economic development in college and found that a strong rule of law with robust protections for intellectual property and fair corporate compliance standards leads to wealth creation and growing economies (all things being equal). This in turn usually leads to flourishing communities, strong civil societies, and stable democracies.

### 3 As a young lawyer, have there been any surprises for you in the practice of law?

I expected most of the challenges of private practice; I even welcomed them. I'm surprised, however, by how personally impactful, rewarding, and enjoyable the practice of law can be. I'm also surprised to learn that I've reached a point in my career where I know enough to know what I'm talking about. Being a new lawyer means constant practice in humility and four years of practice has done wonders for me. Just ask my wife!

### 4 What's the most rewarding part of your job?

There's nothing more rewarding than to be honored with a client's trust and solve a problem that makes a tangible difference in a client's life and or business. Seeing the positive ripple effects of excellent client service makes the often-arduous process worth it.

### 5 You were born in Sierra Leone and your family fled civil war.

#### How does that experience influence who you are today?

The experience of being a civil war refugee has shaped me in more ways than I'm likely aware of. Positively, I'm extremely adaptable and can find a way to thrive in nearly any context. I'm also very good at reading people or situations and identifying possible risks and opportunities. With regard to practicing law, it has given me an unshakable conviction that the law can be a tremendous force for making this world more just and equitable. I also have a profound sense of gratitude for all the privileges I enjoy today. The fact that I survived when so many others didn't brings a certain gravity to my life and work. It's a blessing that I'm determined not to be found unworthy of.

### 6 In May 2019, you were admitted to the US Supreme Court Bar.

#### What does that mean to you?

Becoming the first Sierra Leonean-American to be admitted to the US Supreme Court Bar was easily one of

the most significant events of my career so far. It's no secret that for a very long time in this country, people who look like me or come from where I'm from were considered "unfit" and categorically denied access to this Court—whose decisions have shaped their very lives, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. In light of this reality, getting admitted wasn't just about me. It was a symbolic moment of black, immigrant dignity and excellence; a moment to highlight our achievements in spite of institutional racism and xenophobia.

### 7 Winter is just around the corner. What's your favorite winter activity?

My favorite winter activity is staying as warm as possible. This can look like sitting by a fireplace with a great piece of literature in one hand and a heavenly baked good from my wife in the other, working up a sweat while shoveling snow, or dragging my kids around on a sled.

### 8 When you're not in the office, you are...

On a date with my wife, spending time with my family and our church community, playing soccer in a local adult league, mentoring, or reading literature and nerdy science fiction.

### 9 If you were stranded on a desert island with only one book, it would be...

My Bible, of course! Or a solar-powered Kindle with my Bible, everything written by J.R.R. Tolkien, Dostoyevsky, Augustine, Richard Wright, C.S. Lewis, and the complete *Harry Potter* series.

### 10 Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?

On the cover of *GQ* and *Time* as the next Idris Elba or Denzel Washington! Otherwise, I see myself as a distinguished partner. I'd also like to be part of something that creates significant value for society while maintaining a reputation for excellent client service, love for people, and a humble dependence on Jesus.



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Steve's expansive trial experience over the past 23 years, including trials to verdict in discrimination, whistleblower, reprisal/retaliation, commission, contract, disability, sexual harassment, and wage and hour cases, makes him perfectly suited to join the roster of AAA employment arbitrators. Steve's reputation for fairness and persistence translates to an effective and reliable arbitrator.

## Paul Lukas

With over 29 years of experience, including over 50 class action and individual trials to verdict, Paul is a proven trial veteran who now brings his vast employment and business litigation experience to AAA. Paul will focus his arbitration practice in the same areas as his litigation practice: employment, wage and hour, consumer, ERISA, breach of fiduciary duty, minority shareholder, breach of contract, right of first refusal, non-compete, and other business related disputes.

