Dear Members, Alumni, and Friends:

The 2005-2006 academic year proved to be a great one for BLSA. As we bring another year to a close, we reflect upon our successes, bid farewell to the class of 2006, and transition to new leadership that will implement more innovative endeavors in the coming year.

Approximately forty-five members strong, BLSA has continued to build upon the strengths of previous administrations. Two of our most notable initiatives this year included hanging a portrait of the Law School’s first black graduate, Earl B. Dickerson, and participation in the Chicago Renaissance Gala, coordinated by the Chicago Council of Black Law Students Associations (CCBLSA) and sponsored by several Chicago law firms. At this year’s gala, the Council also chose to honor Earl B. Dickerson, the “Dean of Chicago’s Black Lawyers.” Aside from these events, BLSA continued to host interesting speakers from across the country, provide networking and social activities for our members, encourage alumni participation, and facilitate communication between our organization and the surrounding community.

Next month, BLSA will say goodbye to our 3L class as they transition from law students to Law School alumni. Their guidance and advice over this year has been invaluable and their presence will truly be missed. Although they will be practicing from coast to coast, we hope that they will stay in touch and continue to be active and influential in BLSA and the Law School.

As we say goodbye to one class, we welcome the class of 2008 as they take over the leadership of BLSA. The incoming executive board, led by Euler Bropleh, promises to be an exciting, dynamic group of students. Under their leadership, we can anticipate yet another successful term.

The 2005-2006 BLSA Executive Board thanks you for an excellent year. We hope that you stay in touch.

Signing off,
Christina Gibson
BLSA President, 2005-2006
A new portrait adorns the halls of the Law School. Pictured is the first Black graduate of the Law School, Earl B. Dickerson. Born in Canton, Mississippi in 1891, Dickerson moved to Chicago at the age of 15 in search of racial tolerance and educational opportunities. Sponsored by a white teacher from Mississippi, Dickerson attended the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago for one year, transferred to the Evanston Academy, and eventually finished a degree at the University of Illinois in 1913. After teaching for one year at the Tuskegee University in Alabama and serving as a commissioned officer during World War I, Mr. Dickerson completed a law degree from the University of Chicago Law School in 1920. Known today as the “Dean of Chicago’s Black lawyers”, Mr. Dickerson established a distinguished legal and political career dedicated to issues of racial equality and justice.

In an event sponsored by Schiff Hardin LLP and attended by Dean Levmore, current students and faculty of the Law School, and family and friends of Mr. Dickerson, his portrait was unveiled on February 1, 2006. The first in a series of events exploring the legacy of African-American achievement at the Law School for Black History Month, the unveiling of Mr. Dickerson’s portrait also commemorated the 20th anniversary of his death in 1986. Dean Levmore spoke of Mr. Dickerson’s outstanding success at the law school, pointing out his grade of 86 in Contract law (a humbling moment for most first-year students)! Valerie Jarrett, trustee for the University of Chicago and the University of Chicago Hospitals and first African-American woman to serve as chairman of the Chicago Stock Exchange, gave the ceremony’s keynote address. Mrs. Jarrett, also a Dickerson family friend, spoke of Mr. Dickerson’s achievements as an activist for racial equality in city housing practices and as general counsel for the Supreme Life Insurance Company of America, a predominately Black insurer. Mr. Dickerson was one of the first African-American members of the Chicago Bar Association and represented the father of Chicago playwright Lorraine Hansberry in the case of Hansberry vs. Lee, successfully argued before the Supreme Court to end racially-restrictive real estate covenants. Mr. Dickerson was also politically active, running for Congress in 1938 and serving on the Chicago City Council from 1939-1943. According to Dean Levmore, Mr. Dickerson’s portrait will not be alone on that wall in the academic wing for long. More portraits will be added over time, creating an impressive tribute to the accomplishments of many prestigious Law School graduates.


Sources:
Hyde Park Herald
Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History
The University of Chicago Chronicle, Vol. 25, Issue 7, January 2006

BLSA BLACK HISTORY MONTH WINE MESS

With the generous support of Chicago-based Sachnoff & Weaver, Ltd., the Black Law Students Association sponsored the first Wine Mess of the month on Friday February 3rd, 2006. Designed to kick off the start of Black History Month and spark student body interest in upcoming programs, the Mardi Gras themed event was a great success with traditional Cajun and Creole cuisine catered by Heaven on Seven and Carnivale inspired beverages provided by the Wine Mess Student Committee. In the spirit of New Orleans and Mardi Gras, students and faculty enjoyed music benefiting the Musicares Hurricane Relief Fund while BLSA members passed out beads and encouraged students to spend their spring break rebuilding the Crescent City through the Voices of Katrina project or the Common Ground Collective (http://www.commongroundrelief.org) organization. The event proved to be a wonderful start to the highly successful 2006 Black History Month celebration.
Professor Lacewell on the Katrina Disaster

On February 28, 2006, the Black Law Students Association was honored to have Professor Melissa Harris Lacewell give a lecture at the law school as a part of its Black History Month celebration. Professor Lacewell is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Chicago. She received her B.A. from Wake Forest University, her Ph.D. in political science from Duke University and an honorary doctorate from Meadville Lombard Theological School. Professor Lacewell’s talk focused on the political response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster, and, more specifically, on the role race and framing by the media played in the response.

Professor Lacewell began the lecture by introducing The 2005 Racial Attitudes and the Katrina Disaster Study, the first study to analyze racial differences in reactions to the reporting of the tragedy and people’s attitudes toward the responsibilities of the victims to avoid the disaster. According to the study, overall, blacks supported the federal government spending whatever is necessary to rebuild and restore people to their homes by seventy nine percent, while only thirty-three percent of whites held that position. Additionally, eighty-nine percent of blacks felt that the reason blacks were trapped by Katrina was that they did not have resources to escape, while fifty-six percent of whites held that view. Professor Lacewell believes the data shows why we still cannot decide what to do to rebuild New Orleans—there is no collective political will to act.

Professor Lacewell also presented evidence from another study that showed how framing by the media shapes individual responses to the suggestions about the aid the government should give to the victims of the disaster. In short, the evidence showed that when media captions referred to black victims as refugees, there was an overwhelmingly negative response in terms of how much aid should be given to the victims. Professor Lacewell suggests that this is evidence of the fact that blacks are still in a struggle to be considered full citizens, and that had the captions referred to the victims as members of the Democratic Party, the political response would have been very different.

BLSA is grateful to Professor Lacewell for sharing her time and thoughts with the law school, and we look forward to working with her in the future.

James Cole, Jr. ’95

In what is becoming a tradition, BLSA was privileged to have alumnus Mr. James Cole, Jr., ’95, speak at The Law School during Black History Month. Mr. Cole is the first African American partner at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz, where he works on complex mergers and acquisitions within the Corporate Group.

Those in attendance had the pleasure of being walked through the entire process of one of Mr. Cole’s recent and most grueling transactions, the merger between Whirlpool and Maytag. Although few in the audience understood the complex and hostile nature of M&A deals, Mr. Cole’s comprehensive knowledge and captivating style ensnared the audience and provided tremendous insight into the significance of each stage of the deal and the ensuing “battle of wits” that determines the outcome of many transactions. Mr. Cole’s descriptive analysis of his work painted an exciting but realistic picture of a career as an M&A attorney.

Mr. Cole’s candor continued during a conversation with BLSA members on how to attain success in the corporate world. His experience provides an example of the hard work, determination, and ambition necessary to succeed in what is one of the most demanding markets within the legal profession. While some will shy away from the fast pace world that Mr. Cole described, others have become more enthralled with his reality, solidifying their desires to join his ranks someday.

BLSA appreciates Mr. Cole’s willingness to share his experiences and encourages other alumni to continue their involvement with the chapter.
Brian Nosek: Ordinary Origins of Bias

In celebration of Black History Month, BLSA sponsored several events featuring academics that focus on issues of significance to the African-American community. This included a presentation by Professor Brian Nosek, from the University of Virginia, about how race affects a person’s implicit and explicit attitudes and, consequently, the effect that those attitudes may have on interracial interactions.

Professor Nosek and his colleagues have developed a test, the Implicit Association Test (IAT), which measures the relative ease with which people are able to make associations between groups of people and concepts of good and bad. According to Professor Nosek, human thoughts and actions are shaped by mental activities that occur outside a person’s conscious awareness or control. The test measures these subconscious activities by gauging how quickly a person can associate certain concepts with people of different races. The researchers believe that the faster a person is able to link people of a certain race with attributes that are considered “good”, the greater that person’s preference is for people of that race. The test has revealed that although most people explicitly state that they do not have a racial bias, most people show an implicit preference for people of their race.

The implications of these preferences can have a wide range of effects, from impacting the way a jury views a defendant to the way an interviewer interacts with a job prospect. You may take the test by visiting [https://implicit.harvard.edu/](https://implicit.harvard.edu/).

Comment Topics of BLSA Journal Members

BLSA’s current journal members have written on an interesting array of topics for their student comments, ranging from contributions to terrorism to contributory trademark infringement.


Lastly, Darah Smith, a 2L and upcoming Comment Editor for the Law Review, has written a comment entitled, “CounterfeitLinks.com: A Post-Grokster Standard for Contributory Trademark Infringement through Hyperlinking.”

All in all, these four ladies have penned comments that appeal to a wide range of readers.

Welcome Incoming 2006-2007 BLSA Executive Board

Please join us in congratulating BLSA’s Executive Board 2006-2007. All come to their respective positions with a unique vision and a wealth of ideas.

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Euler Bropleh

Vice President
Matthew McCarthy

Treasurer
Shani Fregia

Secretary
Candace McKinley

Historian
Jessica Lewis

Black History Month Chair
Veronica Root

Social Chair & CCBLSA Representative
Brittany Hamelers

Alumni Relations Chair
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