THE BLSA APPEAL

National Black Law Students Association
The University of Memphis
Benjamin L. Hooks Chapter

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The National Black Law Students Association (NBLSA), is the largest student-run organization in the nation. NBLSA has chapters in more than 200 law schools representing 48 states, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and six foreign countries.

The organization encourages the development of talented, socially conscious law students. Additionally, NBLSA engages in legal activism to effectuate change in the legal community.

While, the organization may have “black law students” in the name, BLSA and NBLSA are organizations geared towards helping students of all colors and ethnicities; these organizations are not limited to African American students only.

One of the goals of our local chapter is to assist you in successfully completing your legal education. To accomplish this goal, we have implemented a number of academic, professional, and social programs,

To learn more about the national organization please visit http://www.nblsa.org
BLSA Spotlight

Rodrequez Cortez Watson

BLSA Treasurer

Rodrequez Cortez Watson is a third-year law student at the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphrey’s School of Law, and is currently the Treasurer of the Benjamin L. Hooks Chapter of the Black Law Students Association (“BLSA”). Rodrequez is a native of Memphis, Tennessee and has lived here a majority of his life. Rodrequez is a product of the Memphis City Schools system where he attended Norris Elementary, Corry Middle, and graduated from Whitehaven High School in 2008. After graduating, Rodrequez went on to attend Middle Tennessee State University where he earned his Bachelors of Science in Political Science with Honors. Rodrequez’s passion to attend law school stems from a sincere belief that he can be a force of positive change in the City of Memphis, but to be that force he has to first obtain the necessary tools.

Since starting school at the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphrey’s School of Law, Rodrequez has been a very active student. After his first year of law school, Rodrequez interned for the Honorable Janice Holder, a former Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court. Furthermore, after his second year of law school, Rodrequez served as a graduate assistant for the Tennessee Institute for Pre-Law Program (“TIP”). Along with his duties as BLSA Treasurer, Rodrequez currently works as a student assistant in the school library, is a Law Clerk at the Shelby County Criminal Justice Complex, and is an Associate Member of the Memphis Mental Health Law and Policy Journal.

Outside of his school obligations, Rodrequez has been deeply involved around the city of Memphis. He is a former after school tutor for
the Big Brother Big Sisters Program and has volunteered extensively with the Neighborhood Christian Center and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital since he was a teenager.

While Rodrequez is honored to have done so many great things, he believes that he has yet to scratch the surface of all that he is going to do. At the current age of 24, Rodrequez still remembers what it was like growing up in one of the roughest neighborhoods in Memphis. Those memories continue to push Rodrequez to be a positive male influence whenever the chance is given. Furthermore, understanding the importance of positive male role models Rodrequez plans to start a mentorship program after law school. He believes that one of the biggest problems with Memphis youth, especially young black males, is that the people who grew up under some of the same circumstances and made it out of those tough situations rarely go back and pull others up.

Rodrequez believes in Memphis and is committed to seeing the city enter a period of growth and prosperity. After law school, Rodrequez plans to use his law degree to help those that really need it. Whether it is helping a family about to lose their home or volunteering in schools around Memphis, Rodrequez will do his part to positively affect the lives of others.
Star Light Star Bright Program

Christmas is a very important holiday for many children, full of smiles and joy. Children often look forward to the array of gifts they may receive on Christmas day each year. The sad reality is that there are many children who aren’t as fortunate to receive gifts on Christmas due to various life circumstances. Fortunately, there is something that can be done to help.

BLSA will partner with the Department of Children’s Services to begin the Star Light Star Bright Program. This program will fulfill the Christmas wish lists of a total of 10 children aged 6-16 years old. We are asking the students and faculty of the Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law and the attorneys of the Memphis Bar to assist us with sponsoring the children by purchasing all or some of the gifts from their wish lists.

The names and wish lists of the children will be made available as soon as November 10th, and the collection of gifts will begin November 17th. At 12:00 p.m. each day from November 17-21, BLSA will be located in the student lounge of the Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law at 1 North Front Street collecting gifts. Upon making a donation, donors will decorate and fill out a “Star Form” to be displayed throughout the week in the school. Donations may be made through December 5th, but donors will need to contact Regina Thompson at rmjones8@memphis.edu to schedule a time to drop off the donation(s) after November 21st. Gifts will be distributed in early December to the children, and donors will have the option to meet the child they donated to. More information about the distribution of gifts will be provided at a later date. We encourage everyone to be a star for these children by fulfilling some or all gifts on their wish lists and adding joy to their Christmas!
Justice In Flux—October 14th

BLSA will partner with the American Constitution Society and the Student Body Association to conduct a panel discussion which aims to reflect on the August judicial elections by examining the impact of influential endorsements and spending on the contests. Panelists will discuss Amendment 2, the proposed amendment to the Tennessee Constitution changing the method of judicial selection. The goal is to alert students and the community to the increasing politicization of judicial elections and empower them to make an informed decision when voting on Amendment 2 in November. Panelists include: Justice Holly Kirby, the newest member of the Tennessee Supreme Court; Judge Gerald Skahan, a former defense attorney recently elected to the Shelby County General Sessions bench; Lang Wiseman, a civil litigation attorney and founding partner at Wiseman Bray, PLLC; and Steven Mulroy, esteemed professor and scholar of election law.
General Body Meeting–October 15th

BLSA will hold its third general body meeting of the semester on Wednesday, October 15th in Room 127 at 12:00 pm.

Breast Cancer Awareness Bake Sale–October 22nd

Breast Cancer Awareness Month is an annual international health campaign organized by major breast cancer charities every October to increase awareness of the disease and to raise funds for research into its cause, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure. BLSA will hold a breast cancer awareness bake sale Wednesday, October 22 from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm in the student lounge. A portion of the proceeds will go to the Memphis Midsouth Susan G. Komen Foundation. There will be numerous delicious homemade treats available for purchase.

Real Talk Wednesday–October 29th

Each month BLSA conducts a candid session with their members about topics related to their experience as students. Topics have ranged from legal writing to stress management. This month we are inviting some legal professionals to weigh in on the conversation. The name of this session will be “Real Talk about the Past, Present, and Future”. There will be a panel of attorneys to talk about their journey during and after law school. The program will take place at the law school on October 29th at 12:00 pm
EVENT RECAP

BLSA Blood Drive

On Wednesday, September 24th, BLSA held its semi-annual blood drive with LifeBlood. Students, faculty, and staff all came and helped us achieve our goal!

(Pictured here: Regina M. Thompson, Community Service Chair)

Domestic Violence Awareness Program

On Monday, October 6th, BLSA partnered with the Association of Women Attorneys to present a Domestic Violence Awareness Program. This program was open to the general public, students, faculty, and staff. It provided awareness and suggested remedies to address the hurtful crime of domestic violence. It also explained the current laws in place for domestic violence offenders, victims and their families. Finally, the event provided an opportunity for discussion of revisions to current laws that should be implemented. The program was moderated by Professor Lynda Black and featured Ms. Brigitte Boyd, Dr. Kim Collins, Ms. Melissa Farrar, Attorney Danielle McCollum, and Officer Justin Rudd as the panel.
Burch, Porter & Johnson Reception

On Wednesday, October 8th, the prestigious law firm of Burch, Porter & Johnson hosted a reception for the students of BLSA. The attorneys discussed the transition from a law student to an attorney, the importance establishing a healthy balance when practicing law, and choosing a law firm that properly fits you and your desires. This event was very informative and we thank Burch, Porter & Johnson for putting on such an astounding event!

(Pictured here: Attorney R. Porter Field and BLSA members)
**Farewell To A True Tiger**

Ms. Janette Smith has devoted 21 years to the University of Memphis, 14 of which were at Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law. She began her journey with the University at Chucalissa Museum and from there to the Psychological Service Center. After leaving the University for a while, she returned to the Undergraduate Admissions, and then to the Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law where she resigned October 3, 2014.

Ms. Smith received her Bachelor’s degree in 2011 in Organizational Leadership. She is currently working on her master’s degree in Human Resources Management, which she hopes to complete next year. She plans on spending her time reading and seeking a career in her field of studies. Ms. Smith has two children, Adrian Maclin and Ernyce Smith, along with two beautiful grandchildren, Madison and Mackenzie. Some of her most memorable moments are the Gala, the move from main campus to downtown, Christmas parties, some former employees (Shawna Engel, Nancy Barron, Ruth McCormick, Dan Brown), and most of all, the students. She really appreciated assisting and participating in the graduation process this past year.

There are many things Ms. Smith will never forget. In 2012, when Ms. Smith lost her mother she appreciated the thoughtfulness and support of the Cecil C. Humphreys family. She also will miss her lunch with co-workers: Brigitte Boyd, Cheryl Edwards, and Stephanie Hope. Finally, Dean Romantz’s “Mercy”, Holly Hazlett’s water fountain runs, and Officer Bowie. Ms. Smith has gained a lot of experience and friendships that she will never forget.

This is in honor of Ms. Janette Smith’s and her 21 years of devotion to the University of Memphis and the Cecil C. Humphreys School Law. We appreciate all that you have done for us. You will be missed tremendously and will never be replaced. We Love You Ms. Smith!

-Your BLSA Family
BLSA DONORS

*The Black Law Students Association would like to send a special thank you to:*

- Brigitte Boyd, Administrative Assistant, Student Affairs
- Stephanie Hope, Administrative Secretary, Career Services
- Daniel Kiel, Associate Professor of Law

BIRTHDAYS

- Jennifer Sneed, 2L, October 6th
- Jay Jayaraman, 1L, October 12th
- Larry Williams, 2L, October 16th
- Darius Walker Jr., 2L, October 31th

ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to Denania Galloway, 1L, who will be celebrating her wedding anniversary October 15th!!

Please share this newsletter with friends, colleagues and family. If anyone would like to be added to this mailing list, please email fnsnford@memphis.edu