

4-26-2022

Letter from the Black Law Student Association President

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Recommended Citation

Courtnei M. Weaver, *Letter from the Black Law Student Association President*, 24 RICH. PUB. INT. L. REV. xix (2022).

Available at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/pilr/vol24/iss3/3>

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE OLIVER HILL
CHAPTER OF THE BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Courtnei M. Weaver

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Dear Readers,

On behalf of the Oliver Hill Chapter of the Black Law Students Association, I am pleased to assist in welcoming you to the Public Interest Law Review's annual Symposium. When PILR invited BLSA to join their Symposium this year, we were thrilled to be partnering for such an important cause. My goal since becoming the president of BLSA has been to give Black law students a voice; by participating in this Symposium that investigates the School-to-Prison-Pipeline, we are getting a chance to uplift and listen to the voices of Black students at every level of education.

After a year brimming with traumatic events, including countless Black people being killed at the hands of the police, I knew it would be difficult to settle on a topic for this Symposium without forcing many people to relive that trauma all over again. Directing our focus on the School-to-Prison-Pipeline undoubtedly means that we will once again have to reckon with the fact that Black people in the United States disproportionately face criminalization and violence, and our schoolyards are not immune. I recognize that immersing ourselves in this issue is painful work and I thank you all for toiling alongside us. I truly believe this Symposium is the perfect way to educate ourselves and our community on the system that pushes children of color out of schools, into prisons, and oftentimes into caskets.

I would like to humbly thank our Keynote Speaker, Valerie Slater, Esq. for her time and willingness to speak at this Symposium and for the continuous work she does to dismantle the youth prison model by promoting the creation of community-based alternatives for incarcerated young people, through her organization RISE for Youth. Thank you to every panelist and speaker for giving their time and energy to bring attention on the ways systemic racism infiltrates education. I would also like to thank PILR for inviting BLSA to take part in this Symposium and including us every step of the way. Finally, I would like to thank the executive board of BLSA for everything they have done to make our student organization successful, and for everything they did to make this edition of PILR's Symposium possible.

The forces behind children of color being pushed out of schools and into prisons are the same that we collectively rallied against after the callous murder of George Floyd this past summer. Systemic racism is an ever-present facet of American life, and my sincerest hope is that by naming it and recognizing it in all of its forms we can fight our way to a better future.

In Memory of:

George Floyd, 46
Breonna Taylor, 26

2021]

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. . . and so many, many, more.

Sincerely,

Courtnei M. Weaver

Oliver Hill Chapter of the Black Law Students Association – President

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