



LWI LIVES

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LWI Lives Committee 6

LWI Lives is a regular electronic publication of the “Faces of LWI” Committee, which explores and communicates the emerging identity of LWI and its members. We have in common the commitment to being the best legal writing professors that we can be. But we are multi-dimensional people with different strengths, interests, curiosities, and gifts. By profiling individuals in our community, we hope to expand and develop our understanding of who we are and what we aspire to be.

You Want To Be Friends with Brenda Gibson



By Elizabeth Berenguer

Somehow, it has taken me eleven years to meet the inimitable Brenda Gibson in person. And lucky me, I had the privilege of spending time with her more than once this summer. On both a professional and personal level, she is a true delight. She is one of those rare people who makes you feel like a better human just by knowing her. She has

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Contributors to this Edition:

**Elizabeth Berenguer
Whitney Heard
Grace Hum**

Tiffany Jeffers: Following in the Footsteps of Thurgood Marshall



By Whitney Heard

In 4th grade, Tiffany Jeffers was assigned a book report that would inspire her to pursue a career in the law. The subject of her book report was Thurgood Marshall: a passionate advocate for civil rights who served as the first African American Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. After completing her book report, Tiffany decided that she wanted to become the “girl” version of Thurgood Marshall. Driven to succeed, Tiffany was committed to following in his footsteps.

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Brenda Gibson

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Brenda sharing her caregiver survival tips with her audience at a women's retreat.

a positive outlook, an infectious smile, and a tenacious spirit. She is the kind of friend who helps you bravely face adversity while encouraging you to stand up for all that is right.

Back in May, I had the privilege of speaking on a panel with her at the ALWD Biennial Conference on the topic of status in the legal writing profession. I learned a few things about Brenda from that experience. First, she is reliable. She was instrumental in organizing conference calls and setting deadlines for submission of our materials. She helped us all stay on track for the conference. Second, she is an outstanding listener. In the planning phases, she thoughtfully considered what everyone was saying and steered us toward a cohesive presentation plan. At the conference, she put those same skills to work on the panel to facilitate an easy flow and comfortable conversation amongst us all. Third, she is a fierce advocate for others. Brenda is one of only a handful of legal writing program directors who is also a woman of color, and as she has risen high in the profession, she has continued to lift others up alongside her. At North Carolina Central University, she has spent years fighting for resources for the program and status for the professors. She is undaunted by political challenges and tirelessly works to achieve recognition for her talented team of professors.

Brenda and her NCCU legal writing team (last LWI Biennial, L to R, Shelly DeAdder, Courtney Bryant, Brenda Gibson, and Lisa Kamarchik)





Brenda Gibson

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Just a few weeks ago, Brenda and I decided to meet up for dinner since we both work in the Raleigh-Durham area. It was the best dinner I have had in a while. My cheeks hurt from laughing and smiling so much! I learned that Brenda and I share a love for sushi, although she likes hers a little spicier than I like mine. She is so generous, she even let me have both pieces of Toro, which is my favorite cut of fish. I also learned that Brenda smiles pretty much constantly. There is a sense of abiding peace about her—even when she is talking about a problem, she is able to smile through it. And this peace is infectious.

In addition, I have learned that Brenda is a caretaker. She cares for her husband and son as well as her aging mother and her mother's dog, Heidi, before the dog's demise. What was truly special about that arrangement with the dog is that the dog was not very nice to Brenda (okay, so the dog hated Brenda, pretty much). To Brenda, Heidi was not just Heidi—she was Heidi, the PTSD dog. Heidi made life hard for Brenda, but Brenda's dear mother loved Heidi so much. So, Brenda selflessly (on most days) cared for Heidi, the PTSD dog, until Heidi's death. She did it for her mother and because it's just what she does—loving even the seemingly unlovable. That same joyfully stubborn temperament shows up in her legal writing classroom and committee meetings alike.

Brenda has a generous, bright spirit that is full of energy. I love this idea of having a joyfully stubborn temperament—it makes me want to turn my own stubbornness into joy. Knowing her makes me a better person, and I hope that we have another chance to share sushi soon.

To get in touch with Brenda, you can email her at bgibson@ncsu.edu.



Brenda and retired NC Supreme Court Justice Patricia Timmons-Goodson after a Spring 2019 Women Judges Panel. Justice Timmons-Goodson was her second boss out of law school and continues to be Brenda's mentor and dear family friend.

Tiffany Jeffers

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Tiffany Jeffers serves as an Assistant Professor of Legal Writing and Director of Bar Preparation at her alma mater, Pennsylvania State University, Dickinson School of Law.

This drive to succeed earned Tiffany admission to Spelman College, a historically black liberal arts college for women located in Atlanta, Georgia. As a political science major, she enjoyed her classes that looked at historical events through the lens of the oppressed and classes that exposed her to the continued marginalization of people from the African diaspora. As a first-generation college student, Tiffany was impressed that many of her classmates had parents and grandparents who had attended college. They showed her how she could use her education to be an influencer of change, just like Thurgood Marshall. Although she had grown up in a predominately white neighborhood, Tiffany was no longer the only black student in an honors class. Surrounded by throngs of thriving black women who were passionate about learning and achieving, Tiffany was transformed by her peers as much as by her classes.

Sadly, Tiffany encountered an obstacle to realizing her dream of following in Thurgood Marshall's footsteps when she was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer as a senior in college. Fortunately, she had the support of her Spelman community. The Spelman nurses helped her make medical appointments, coordinate medical care, and update her family. Her Spelman professors helped her graduate on time by allowing her to write papers in lieu of attending her final semester of classes. Because of those Spelman nurses and professors, Tiffany was able to walk across the stage at graduation.

As a result of her cancer diagnosis and treatment, Tiffany had to postpone law school for a year. She spent that year working as a project assistant at King & Spalding. However, she knew that she had to leave the law firm to follow her dream of going to law school. As a cancer survivor with a profound understanding that life is short, Tiffany felt an urgent resolve to help people and influence change.

To that end, Tiffany began her legal studies at Pennsylvania State University, Dickinson School of Law. Tiffany did not enter law school planning to practice criminal law. However, after clerking for a judge assigned to the domestic relations division of the DC Superior Court, Tiffany applied for a position with the State's Attorney's Office in Baltimore County, Maryland. When she accepted the offer to become an Assistant State's Attorney, she did not know what to expect. However, she understood and appreciated the discretion given to prosecutors. And she was committed to using that discretion to pursue justice whether that meant winning or losing a case.

For more than seven years, she prosecuted misdemeanor and felony cases on behalf of the public. However, in the wake of police shootings in Baltimore County and throughout the nation, Tiffany decided to leave the State's Attorney's Office. She knew how the criminal justice system impacted poor people and people of color. With Thurgood Marshall as her North Star, she worked hard as a prosecutor to influence change and improve the system. However, to make an even more meaningful impact, she decided to enter academia

Tiffany Jeffers

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Tiffany with a group of Penn State Dickinson students on a trip to the Supreme Court in October 2017.



Tiffany with her family at a Christmas Eve church service in December 2018.

where she could teach and mentor aspiring attorneys.

As an Assistant Professor of Legal Writing and Director of Bar Preparation at her alma mater, Tiffany teaches Penn State Dickinson students to follow their hearts whether that means pursuing a career in the public or private sector. For her students of color, in particular, she assures them that they are not obligated to pursue careers in public interest simply because of their identity as persons from marginalized groups. She encourages these students to follow their hearts, even if it leads them to a big firm, without any guilt about the salary or prestige of the position. As an alumnae, Tiffany is uniquely qualified to show students what they can do with a law degree from Penn State Dickinson as long as they are willing to work hard. Going beyond the intricacies of legal analysis and writing, she honors Thurgood Marshall by teaching her students about the service component of lawyering and the need to practice with integrity.

When she is not teaching and mentoring law students, Tiffany embraces healthy and happy living with her family. In addition to regularly practicing mindfulness and managing stress, Tiffany incorporates nutrient-rich foods into her family's diet. Instead of avoiding "bad" foods only, Tiffany focuses on eating "good" foods by using the Paleo Autoimmune Protocol as a guide. The Paleo AIP diet advises eliminating foods that may cause inflammation in the gut as well as eating nutrient-rich foods. Preparing more nutrient-rich meals from scratch has taught Tiffany that processed and unprocessed foods taste differently. Fortunately, her family's taste buds have learned to adjust to the difference. So much so, one of their favorite recipes is her beet smoothies (beet stems included)!

Tiffany's commitment to healthy living gives her the energy necessary to keep up with her daughter Carter and son Clarence. Tiffany's hope as a mother is for Carter and Clarence to be loving and kind people with strong self-esteem. Knowing how a perfectionist attitude affected her childhood, though, Tiffany strives to create an environment where her children feel comfortable making mistakes and risking failure to learn and grow. Raising black children in a Pennsylvania community with very few people of color presents its own set of challenges. But, in following the footsteps of Thurgood Marshall, Tiffany has amassed the knowledge, experience, and character to excel as a mother and as a professor (and justified the assigning of 4th grade book reports)!

To get in touch with Tiffany, you can email her at tnw123@psu.edu.

UPCOMING LEGAL WRITING EVENTS

2019 AASE Bi-Annual Diversity Conference

DePaul University
Chicago, IL
October 3-4, 2019

New England Consortium of Legal Writing Teachers

Boston College
October 11, 2019

Global Legal Skills Conference

Arizona State University
December 12-14, 2019

2020 AALS Annual Meeting

Washington, DC
January 2-5, 2020

Conference on Writing & Well-Being

University of Arizona
January 9-12, 2020

20th Biennial Conference, Rhetoric Society of America

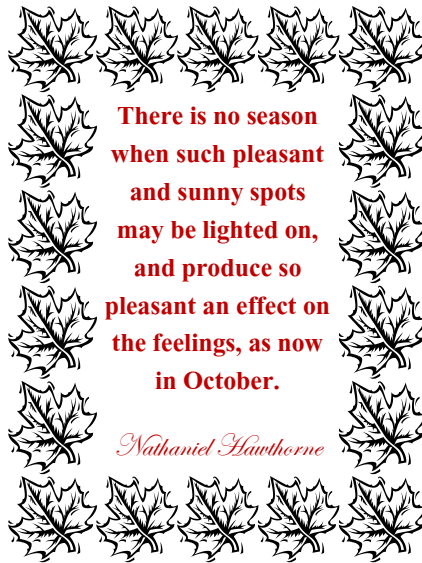
Portland, OR
May 21-24, 2020

LWI Biennial Conference

Georgetown University
July 15-18, 2020

Check out these websites for more
information on what's happening!

<http://www.lwionline.org/>
<http://www.alwd.org/>
<http://www.aals.org/aals-events/>



LWI Lives Selection Process

The LWI Lives Committee is organized into three teams, and each team is responsible for selecting, proposing, and writing the three profiles in each issue. To ensure a diverse newsletter, teams propose individual names to the Co-Chairs, and the Co-Chairs review the suggestions to ensure a wide range of coverage over time.

If you have someone in mind who we should put on the list for a future newsletter, please feel free to email any of the committee members listed below. If you could include a note explaining why you think the individual's profile would be particularly interesting, it will help us in developing priorities.

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