



LWI LIVES

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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.

Annie Scardulla: An Optimist’s Journey



By Whitney Heard

Annie Scardulla joined the University of North Carolina School of Law as a Clinical Assistant Professor of Law in 2020, after completing her Advocacy Fellowship at Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center. While leaving family and friends in the middle of a global pandemic to start a new job in a new state may sound daunting to most people, Annie embraced this opportunity with an optimistic energy that is equally infectious and inspiring.

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Gail Stephenson: Louisiana Smile



By Michael Oeser

Rice, not pasta. Crawfish, not Crawdads. Mardi Gras, not New Years. Professor Gail S. Stephenson is a Louisiana native, and it shows in the best of ways. Her smile, laugh, friendliness, and southern manners all have a charming Louisiana flavor. But once you get to know her, the most wonderful thing about her is her kindness.

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Kemba Taylor: Faith, Family, Friends, Education



By Kathryn Falk Campbell

I remember the first time I walked into Kemba Taylor’s office at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles. I had just moved from California Western in San Diego to teach at Southwestern. I didn’t know my new colleagues, and was, even after all my years on this planet, petrified of the unknown. Kemba was behind her desk. The light from the window behind her actually silhouetted her.

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Contributors to this Edition:

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Annie Scardulla

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During her three years as an Advocacy Fellow, Annie helped manage LSU Law's moot court, trial advocacy, and dispute resolution programs by coaching teams and developing curriculum. As a coach, Annie traveled to competitions with several teams, which meant that she was away from home most weekends. True to form, Annie found a way to make those trips as fun and memorable as possible. To get to know students better when traveling, Annie created a series of questions to stimulate conversation. For example, if you could give a TED talk on anything, what would it be? Or, what would you do if time and money weren't an issue? This semester, Annie is using those same questions at UNC to connect with her students and build a learning community.

Of course, one of the benefits of coaching competition teams is collecting travel stories. One memorable travel story happened when Annie accompanied the ABA team to its competition in Washington, DC. At the time, an alumnus of LSU Law was clerking at the U.S. Supreme Court. In a truly serendipitous twist, the alumnus had participated on the ABA team while at LSU Law, and he knew Annie from her time as a student at LSU Law. These connections culminated in the ABA team's visiting the U.S. Supreme Court for a private tour, including a special visit to the courtroom. While in the courtroom, the students were invited and encouraged to stand at the podium as if presenting their cases on appeal. Everyone left the U.S. Supreme Court that day with a treasured memory to add to their collection of travel stories!



Annie with LSU ABA Competition team visiting the U.S. Supreme Court

In between managing the program and coaching teams, Annie dedicated her time and energy to introducing new advocacy-related academic opportunities for students. She developed workshops on brief-writing, negotiation skills, and oral argument. One of her proudest accomplishments was creating an eight-week, voluntary program called Fit to Practice for students at LSU Law and Southern University Law Center. The purpose of the program was to familiarize students with the life of a civil case and essential advocacy skills. The students attended lectures, listened to guest speakers, and learned about the importance of health and wellness in the legal profession. While Annie doesn't know if the program will continue as she designed it, Fit to Practice taught her that students are hungry for practical knowledge.



In her second year as an Advocacy Fellow, Annie jumped at the chance to teach a section of legal research and writing and a summer judicial externship seminar. She was immediately enchanted with teaching first-year students how to research, analyze, and write, and she knew that this spell wasn't going to be broken. Not surprisingly, her students felt the same. In 2020, Annie was chosen as the "LSU Law Professor of the Year." Winning that award made Annie realize that she had impacted a broader student population at LSU Law than the students she taught and coached. It was an especially touching honor because she knew that she would be saying

Annie Scardulla

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goodbye to LSU Law in 2020. Indeed, the night that the award was announced, Annie received an email from a group of advocacy students with a series of personal letters, reminiscing about their time together at LSU Law and sending well wishes for her new academic adventure. Understandably, Annie cried a lot of bittersweet tears that night.

Because Annie's term as an Advocacy Fellow was limited, she went on the market. And, when she was offered the position at UNC, she knew that she had to make the move, even though it meant teaching in a new place where she did not know anyone. In addition to leaving her extended family who live in Louisiana, Annie was leaving her family at LSU Law. Unfortunately, Annie wasn't even able to say goodbye to her colleagues and students because LSU Law had to cancel its advocacy banquet and graduation in response to the global pandemic. Even so, with her characteristic optimism, Annie thought of what she would tell her students when faced with a difficult situation. Knowing that she would never advise students to stay in their comfort zones, she followed her own advice and took the uncomfortable path that led to personal and professional growth.

Fortunately, that path led Annie to a dream job in a dream place! As Annie wisely observed, "Why wait until retirement to move to a beautiful place? It is 2 hours to the beach and 2 hours to the mountains." Even so, starting a new job during a global pandemic is a very strange experience. For example, how do you meet your colleagues when no one is going to the office? Thankfully, the legal writing professors at UNC have welcomed Annie and made her feel like a valued member of the team, even if it is a Zoom team. Moreover, always one to turn lemons into lemonade, Annie sees this moment in education as an excuse and a reason to embrace new things, whether it's a new textbook or digital notebook. And, while Annie is busy teaching her two sections of first-year legal research and writing this year, she is excited to be a resource for UNC's student-run moot court program when the time is right.

The one bright spot during the pandemic for Annie was being given extra time with her family in Louisiana. Before moving to North Carolina, Annie got a crash course in motherhood, literally overnight, when she drove from Baton Rouge to Hammond to take care of her three-year-old cousin. For three months, Annie lived with her family and took care of her cousin all day, every day. In addition to being the most stressful time in her life, it was also the most special. Annie and her cousin played, learned letter sounds, and spent way too much time in the sprinkler! She will never take that special time for granted, proving once again that Annie finds joy wherever she goes and whatever she does.

With her impressive supply of optimistic energy, Annie will continue to pursue personal and professional success in an inspiring and infectious way! I look forward to celebrating those successes alongside her students, colleagues, family, and friends.

To get in touch with Annie, you can email her at scardull@email.unc.edu.



Before moving to North Carolina this summer, Annie got a crash course in motherhood when she took care of her three-year-old cousin all day, every day for three months.

Gail Stephenson

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Gail and her granddaughter, Zelda, marching with the Trashy Nuts Krewe, a Mardi Gras parade group that designs all of its costumes from recycled materials.

Gail spent most of her childhood in Campti, a small town in northern Louisiana. She is the eldest of 5 children. Her mother was a seamstress. Her father was a self-taught electronics engineer, whose talents got him noticed by the Department of Defense during World War II. Gail's father was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's when she was six. Shortly thereafter, it fell to her mother to support the family with her sewing.

"We were poor but didn't know it, because we were better off than many other people in Campti," she recalls. Her mother made all their clothes. The first piece of clothing Gail bought from a store was a pair of jeans in high school. "There were several times when my mother had made a piece of clothing for me and there would be a child in need, and my mother would give it to the child," she recalls. "When I asked, my mother would always tell me, 'Because she needs it more than you.'"

Gail was goal oriented from a very early age, and never let gender-based expectations limit her. Gail did not always want to be a lawyer. Originally, she wanted to be the first woman president, but then she saw how much older people looked afterwards and changed her mind.

Never one to be constrained by gender roles, when Gail was applying to law school she set her sights on winning a scholarship from Tulane that was explicitly only for males. Gail ended up being

the first female ever offered the scholarship, although she ultimately turned it down to pursue her degree at Louisiana State University's Law Center, where she was a member of the Louisiana Law Review and Order of the Coif.

The habits of kindness she learned at her mother's knee sticks with her to this day. She volunteers with her church prayer group making quilts that are always donated to the needy. She is also a member of the Trashy Nuts Krewe, a Mardi Gras parade group that raises awareness about recycling. The Trashy Nuts makes all its decorations and costumes from recycled materials. Her granddaughter Zelda often joins her in collecting materials, making decorations, and marching. Gail's husband Joe, son Scott, and daughter-in-law Bonny round out the rest of Gail's immediate family.

Gail spends lots of time doting on her granddaughter, Zelda. Baking special cakes has become a hobby. "One year she had a dragon party, so I made a dragon egg cake that opened up and had a baby dragon inside."

Professionally, Gail's reputation for wordsmithing extends well beyond academia. She has served on the Louisiana Bar Journal's editorial board since 1999 and currently serves as the recent developments editor. She currently serves as senior assistant editor of The Baton Rouge Lawyer, the Baton Rouge Bar Association's bi-monthly magazine. She also authors the column, "Gail's Grammar." In 2014, the Louisiana Bar Association named her Distinguished Law Professor of the Year.



Gail enjoys baking cakes for her granddaughter, Zelda. Pictured here: a "Dragon's Egg" cake (before and after hatching!) that Gail designed for Zelda.

Gail Stephenson

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Gail volunteers at her Church to make quilts for those in need.

One of the most interesting things about Gail is her historical perspective on social justice issues. Gail is in her 17th year as Director of Legal Writing at Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a historically black university. Gail's early memories are from the late 1950s and early 1960s, during the height of the civil rights movement. "I still remember being jerked back from the water fountain as a child because I was at the wrong water fountain." Bigotry and race-based violence were commonplace in rural northern Louisiana back then. Something her childhood best friend's father said is indicative of the times. "I remember [he] said that if the man who shot Martin Luther King, Jr. ever came through Campti, he would buy him a hamburger."

Gail's parents were unusual for that time and place. They taught their children to treat everyone with respect, and never to use certain words to refer to African Americans. "We've come a long way, but clearly not far enough," she says.

She also witnessed the transition from segregated schools to desegregated schools. "Things were segregated three ways [in the area where I grew up]," Gail said. "There were separate schools for white children, black children, and Creole children. Same way with the churches."

When desegregation was first required, there were only a few children of color that went to her school, she recalls, and things were very hard for those students. "Then, in 10th grade, when broad-based desegregation was required by law and the three separate schools were all integrated at once, things went smoothly by comparison."

Gail is just finishing an article on the desegregation of American law schools. It will be published in 2021. Gail also placed several related articles on the topic. From her unique vantage point, Gail says the race-based tensions that have grown over the past several years are not an indication that civil rights efforts have lost ground. "I think what has always been there is more just exposed now. I don't think this is backtracking; I think it is just coming to light."

To get in touch with Gail, you can reach her at: gstephenson@sulc.edu

Kemba Taylor

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Then I saw her smile. I think she must have turned on the office lights when she smiled, because I remember the silhouette was gone. I remember seeing her eyes soften and twinkle as she stood up to greet me. The woman looked genuinely happy to see me. I've since learned that everyone feels that way in her company.

When she rose to come around her desk to greet me, I realized I was looking at the most elegant statuesque person I'd ever stood with. There was nothing in the least bit oppressive or autocratic in her presence. Instead, a gentle, stalwart sense of grace and loving kindness and humanity swept through me immediately.

Now I know this may be a little bit of an odd way to introduce LWI to our colleague. But as I thought about how to convey a sense of who Kemba is, this scene and the feeling of peace she generated kept coming back to me. While she would never in a million years even acknowledge that she has this effect on people, it is clear to me: only when that soul-level presence is clear, only then does any story or description of Kemba make sense.

Kemba Taylor was born in Trinidad to a Trinidadian diplomat father named Winston, and a Guyanese nurse mother named Hazel. As foreign envoy on his ambassador's staff, he took the family—Hazel, Kemba, and Kemba's two year-old sister Toni—with him from Trinidad to Guyana, Switzerland, Brazil, and England. Kemba's Black identity is central to her, and took root early. From the time Kemba was very young, all of the people with power and influence in her life were Black. The Prime Minister of Guyana and the Prime Minister of Jamaica were Kemba's uncles. Kemba laughs when she tells me about her mother's sister, Aunt Shirley, who married both of those uncles. At different times, of course. And Aunt Shirley herself was Guyana's Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of Education. It's no wonder Kemba would grow up to be a Stanford and Berkeley educated law clerk and attorney handling multi-billion dollar government contract actions. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

By the time Kemba was eleven, she had lived in five countries. That's when the family moved to New Jersey, and the law appeared on Kemba's radar. Winston had finished his time as a diplomat, and decided to follow up on the LLM and Ph.D. (Law of the Seas) he had earned in London. He went to Rutgers Law School in the United States and became a lawyer here. With family in New Jersey and New York, he was able to fashion a strong career (and still takes on a case or two every now and then). Little did teenage Kemba know, she'd follow in his footsteps and study the law, and become an educator, too.

Education is a primary value for Kemba's family. And she has an impressive education herself. Having moved to California in the '80s, the family was naturally attracted to west coast schools. Kemba's sister Toni went to Stanford (and went on to become a physician). Apparently Kemba has a little competitive feeling about her sister, so she figured she'd go to Stanford too. (Toni eventually married Albert Einstein's cousin. The entire family seems organically linked to humans of tremendous intellect and service.)

At Stanford, a good friend of Kemba's dated a nice young man named Jason, although she didn't pay a lot of attention to him. Ten years later, serendipitously on September 11, 2001, Kemba and Jason would meet again, and eventually marry. But during her time at Stanford and in law school, none of that was on her radar. She was busy studying and winning awards (Irvine Fellowship, the Stanford Undergraduate Award and Grant for Exemplary Research). She also worked as a summer Research Fellow at the Hoover Institute.



Kemba with Hazel, Ella (7), Olivia (11), Langston (11), and Jason

Kemba Taylor

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The Black identity that was always central to Kemba's life flourished at Stanford. In her sophomore year, Kemba pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, founded in 1913 at Howard University by twenty-two Black women to empower others. Its motto: "Intelligence is the Torch of Wisdom." When Kemba graduated from Stanford with a history degree in 1993, like many with history BAs, law school seemed like something to do. She had her choice of schools, and chose to stay in North-west California, at UC Berkeley Law School when they offered her a full ride. At Berkeley, Kemba earned a Graduate Opportunity Fellowship, served as abstracts editor of the *African American Law & Policy Report*, and was a member of the *Berkeley Women's Law Journal*. She was also a legal instructor for the law school's Street Law Program and a teaching assistant in the African & African American Studies Department.

Being faithful and living life open to the experiences that it offers, Kemba began exploring what it was to be a lawyer. After graduating Berkeley Law School in 1996, she worked for the firm of McKenna & Cuneo in Los Angeles, where she participated in case management and litigation strategy planning of a multi-billion dollar government contract action.

Knowing that Kemba was looking for a smaller firm, her law school roommate brought her in as an associate with the firm of Levene, Neale, Bender & Rankin, where she made over 100 federal court appearances and handled cases involving bankruptcy and general business issues. In fall 2000, she became an associate at Browne Woods & George, where she was the primary attorney in charge of a variety of business cases including intellectual property, unfair business practices, contract disputes, and general business litigation. Kemba loved being in court, and was particularly impressed during a stint as lead chair in a bench trial with a formidable Black woman federal judge. Later, that same Judge Erithe Smith and Kemba would meet again at Southwestern, where Judge Smith contributes time to the students and judges many of the Moot Court competitions.

During all this, Jason reappeared. Kemba values her friendships, and keeps up her relationships. Her Stanford friend showed Kemba a picture of Jason, and said, "Remember Jason? My old boyfriend? You guys should hang." It seems Kemba figured, "What the heck." The timing somehow added significance to their reunion; on September 11, 2001, hours after the twin towers came down, with the Pentagon still smoldering from the flames of the plane that hit it, Jason and Kemba had a long and wonderful phone conversation.

Apparently the conversation was so good that Kemba drove from San Francisco to Los Angeles (there was no flying yet) for their first date on September 14, 2001, ten years after they met. After a long distance relationship, Jason (by then a Harvard Business School MBA) moved to Los Angeles with an understanding that he and Kemba were serious about their future together. He met her parents a month later and on May 1, 2004, in the Dunsmuir House near Berkeley, they wed.

In 2007, one of Kemba's sorority sisters from Stanford, Tara Walters, brought Kemba to teach at Southwestern Law School. At Southwestern, Kemba and Tara co-coached winning BLSA Frederick Douglas Moot Court Teams together, including the trifecta of a First Place Oral Advocacy Team win, Best Brief, and a Best Oral Advocate for one competition. (That particular time the team argued a voting rights and equal protection case.) Kemba is still teaching at Southwestern today and honors her profession. Just as education is central for her family, education is also central to her life. She says, "Education is crucial. Opportunities open, lives are enriched." And she brings this enrichment and door opening to her law students.



Education has always been central to Kemba's life, and she enjoys using it to enrich the lives of her students.

Kemba Taylor

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Professor Kemba Taylor has a reputation with her students for being thorough, organized, focused, kind, and demanding. She gets to know their personal learning requirements, and delivers her lessons in ways that everyone should be able to



access. She loves her students' eagerness and openness to learn new things and work in new ways. She gives them everything they need to be able to do the work of writing legal memos and briefs. And because she gives them everything, she expects they will use it. (Or the way she puts it: "Because they know everything, they'd better use it.") She demands excellence. She is liberal with praise when deserved, and clear and pointed with corrections. She demands that the students do not fall short of their own potential. And, her joy is palpable when she sees students "get it."

Kemba has always been a kind, yet demanding professor. Empathy and patience have always been important to her, although she finds that they're more important than ever during this unusual year.

This year with COVID, our unusual (fully online) classes and new teaching methods have made Kemba think more about how to help her students access the very best in themselves. While empathy, patience, and availability have always been

important to her relationship with her classes, she says that this year, empathy has moved up to take a front seat. She is deliberately more patient, more attuned to their various needs and various learning methods, and more available. Kemba seeks to engage her students "without noise." This year even more than ever, simplicity and few distractions are watchwords.

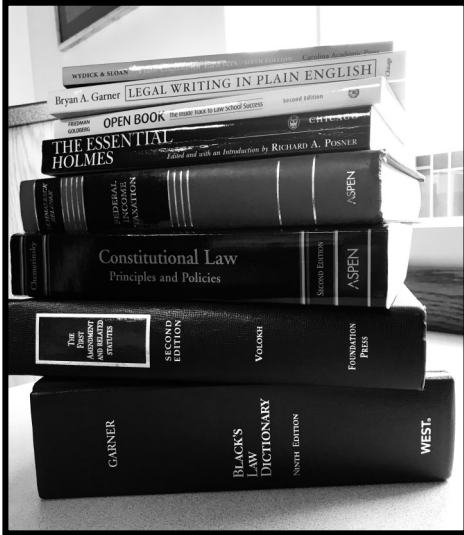
Family is Kemba's greatest value. She focuses on the motivation, energy, and love that grow from her loved ones. Jason and Kemba's eleven-year-old twins (Olivia and Langston), and their little sister Ella are the core of their world. Langston and Olivia practice Tae-Kwon-Do and are huge soccer players (Langston has been rating star level kudos, and Olivia is a strong tournament team player). Ella is excited at age seven by performance and dance. She is all girl and likes sparkles and pink. Kemba's mother had been living six months in Guyana and six months in California every year since she retired from nursing. When the pandemic became real, Kemba's mother moved in with the family full time. She has been baking bread every day, filling the home with the smells of a happy kitchen.

While we didn't talk about it when I interviewed Kemba for this article, I see Kemba loving her role as mom even more this year as she works with her kids to master COVID-School-From-Home. Jason and Kemba make education and faith central to their family. I can't imagine it is easy keeping the household on track through this pandemic, while teaching a full load of law students, being Faculty Advisor for BLSA, and balancing all her other Southwestern Law School duties. But Kemba does it all. And she does it clothed in the most beautiful suit of elegance.

And about that elegance. Kemba remembers watching her Aunt Desiree getting ready to go to work, when Kemba was a very little girl. Aunt Desiree was a formidable economist. And "she had great business dress. Suits and matching hats and pumps in every color. These were can't mess with me, kicking butt suits." They were sophisticated and elegant, courageous and assured. Young Kemba thought, "I'm going to wear bad-ass suits like that when I grow up."

And she does.

To get in touch with Kemba, you can reach her at: ktaylor@swlaw.edu



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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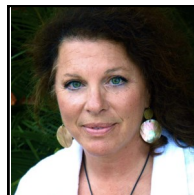
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