

ISSUE 2 | OCTOBER 2019

# CHANGING SEASONS



RONALD J. FREEMAN CHAPTER OF THE BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION  
GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

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# Young, Gifted and Black in Mental Health Awareness

Featuring Dr. Kelsei LeAnn

Dr. Kelsei LeAnn, is a Shreveport, Louisiana native, and a licensed therapist in Louisiana. Her practice is unique because she highlights spirituality and mental health. In pursuit of her bachelor's degree at Southern University, she discovered her passion for therapy. Dr. Kelsei decided to pursue a Doctor of Psychology in Biblical Psychology from Hope Bible Institute.

Dr. Kelsei recently opened her private practice, Inner Works Counseling Center, where she focuses primarily on the impacts that childhood trauma has on adult mental health. Her dream of becoming a mental health professional began when her father introduced her to the field of psychology. She uses cognitive therapy and psychotherapy to assist her patients with combatting childhood trauma and creating a positive mental health environment.

Dr. Kelsei prides herself on increasing the dialogue surrounding mental health in our community. She uses social media as a platform to increase the conversation by sharing tactics and tips that she uses with her patients in her private practice. When asked why she pursued a career as a mental health professional, Dr. Kelsei stated that she "fell in love" with counseling and the art of healing people by working through their childhood trauma. "Mental health is just as important, if not more important, than your physical health," Dr. Kelsei said. The same way we don't question going to the hospital when we don't feel well, we should see therapy in the same light."

We invited Dr. Kelsei to share tips to our student body on dealing with stress, negative self-talk and mental health stereotypes in our community.

**STORY CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE**



# SERVING PATIENTS WITH STYLE, SPIRITUALITY AND GRACE

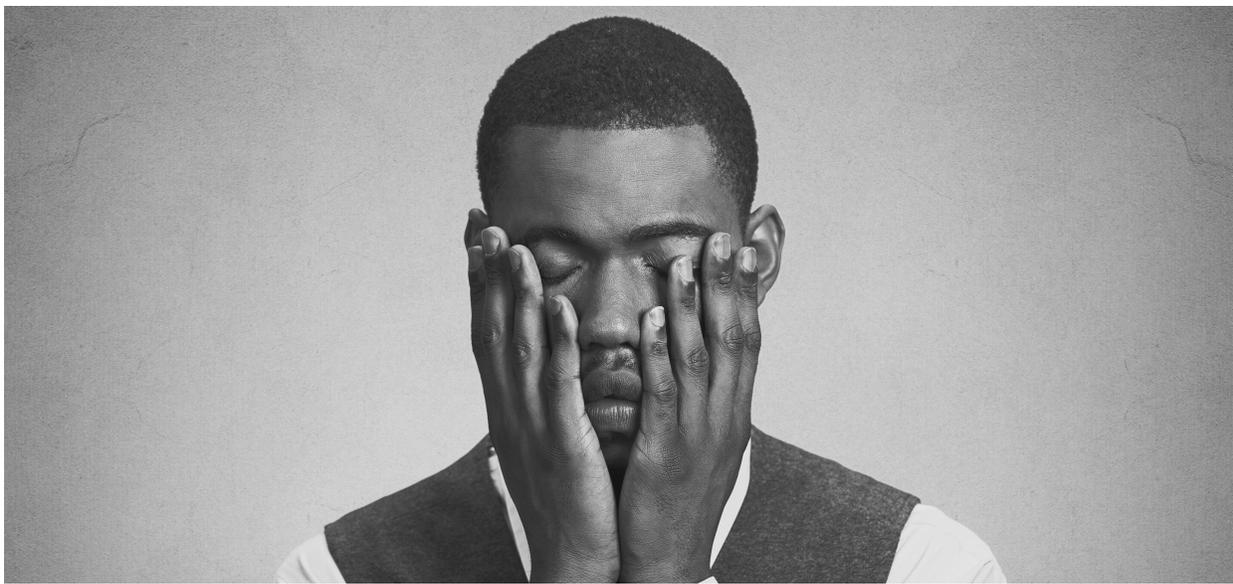
First, Dr. Kelsei advocates for law students to be open and candid about the issues that they may experience. She wants students to understand that they are immersed in a community of like-minded individuals. A big issue in mental health progression is the lack of transparency. She encourages students to "look at their fellow colleagues" and realize "that they are not alone."

Dr. Kelsei found that the number one stereotype that she debunks in her practice is the belief that you cannot be "religious [and] spiritual and suffer from things [such as] depression and anxiety." In the African-American community, people are often told to "pray away" their mental health issues. However, this not only perpetuates negative coping mechanisms, but it places unrealistic expectations on self-help remedies.

Another inhibitor in the African-American community is the lack of conversation and the need to disguise pain and trauma as triumph. "We carry centuries of generational childhood trauma that our parents and grandparents will never talk about," Dr. Kelsei said. Our parents and grandparents fail to share their painful experiences and seek professional guidance to overcome them. According to Dr. Kelsei, this results in our beloved ancestors passing their trauma on to their descendants and "if we don't recognize it, we'll pass it down to our kids, which causes a never-ending generational [traumatic] cycle."



**"We carry centuries  
of generational  
childhood trauma  
that our parents and  
grandparents will  
never talk about."**



Many African-American law students are breaking generational poverty by pursuing a higher education. These students bear the burden of breaking the barriers for their families and paving the road of possibilities for generations to come. The journey of doing so can often lead to negative self-talk and disbelief in their ability to succeed. To combat negative self-talk, Dr. Kelsei recommends that "for every negative thing, you think about yourself, write down two positive things that combats it. This makes you confront the lies you tell yourself."

In addition to negative self-talk, many law students, lawyers, legal professionals, irregardless of ethnicity, battle depression and anxiety on a daily basis. "When it comes to your anxiety, BREATHE! Breathing forces your anxiety to slow down. 10 deep breaths in, 10 deep breaths out from your stomach," Dr. Kelsei advised.

She continued by stating, "if you're struggling with depression, I encourage you to do the opposite of what your depression is telling you to do. If it's telling you to stay in the bed, get up and move around, I would also highly recommend seeing a licensed professional to assist you individually." Students often ignore the free resources that are available to them on their campuses. Dr. Kelsei strongly suggests that students check out their on-campus counseling center because they are filled with professionals who are there for the specific purpose of assisting students.

Proper intervention and support are quintessential factors in building a better community. If you know a friend, family member or loved one dealing with depression, Dr. Kelsei recommends that the community simply open "the door of communication" and reassure them that you are safe zone. Reassurance will allow the person to "confide and find security with you."

Dr. Kelsei advises supporters to intervene by encouraging the person as much as possible, "but also suggest the option of seeking professional help." She also notes that your intervention approach matters. Do not make the person feel guilty for needing help when you recommend professional counseling and therapy. Do not force the individual, but simply make a "gentle suggestion."

Dr. Kelsei's social media platforms have grown exponentially over the past few months. She offers giveaways and free counseling tips to her followers on a regular basis. To receive daily motivation and advice, follow Dr. Kelsei's on Twitter and Instagram @DrKelseiLeann!



**Be sure to follow!**

**@DrKelseiLeAnn**

**In order to be a mentor, and an effective one, one must care. You must care. You don't have to know how many square miles are in Idaho, you don't need to know what is the chemical makeup of chemistry, or of blood or water. Know what you know and care about the person, care about what you know and care about the person you're sharing with."**

**-Maya Angelou**

**Civil Rights Activist, Author, Poet, and Humanitarian**



# THE CALL TO SERVICE

**BLSA INTRODUCES  
MENTOR-MENTEE PROGRAM**



iMPROVE  
DEVELOP  
TRAINING  
MOTIVATE  
COACHING  
iNSPIRE

It is no secret that BLSA serves as a second family to the student body. No matter, the ethnicity, gender, religion or creed, BLSA prides itself on ensuring the success of all students, especially the "babies on the block," our dearest 1Ls. The call to serve others is no easy feat. It takes humility and selflessness to put one's personal needs aside in order to care for another's.

The Mentor-Mentee Program serves as a bridge to provide first-year students with a "seasoned" brother or sister to guide them along their journey to esquire. Mentees are "matched" with a mentor with similar likes and interests.

BLSA Vice-President, Andrew Boyer, oversees the program and finds pride in the program's success thus far. "The BLSA Mentor-Mentee Program provides an opportunity for upperclassmen to mentor and guide incoming 1Ls," Boyer said. "It provides a bridge for students to get acclimated to their new found home and life in law school."

Mentors are encouraged to meet with their mentees outside the law school setting and to assist them with course selection and applying for internships. Above all, the program provides an everlasting relationship and network that will survive well past students' matriculation at GSU Law.



“

“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”

-CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE ON THE  
IMPACT OF SINGLE STORIES

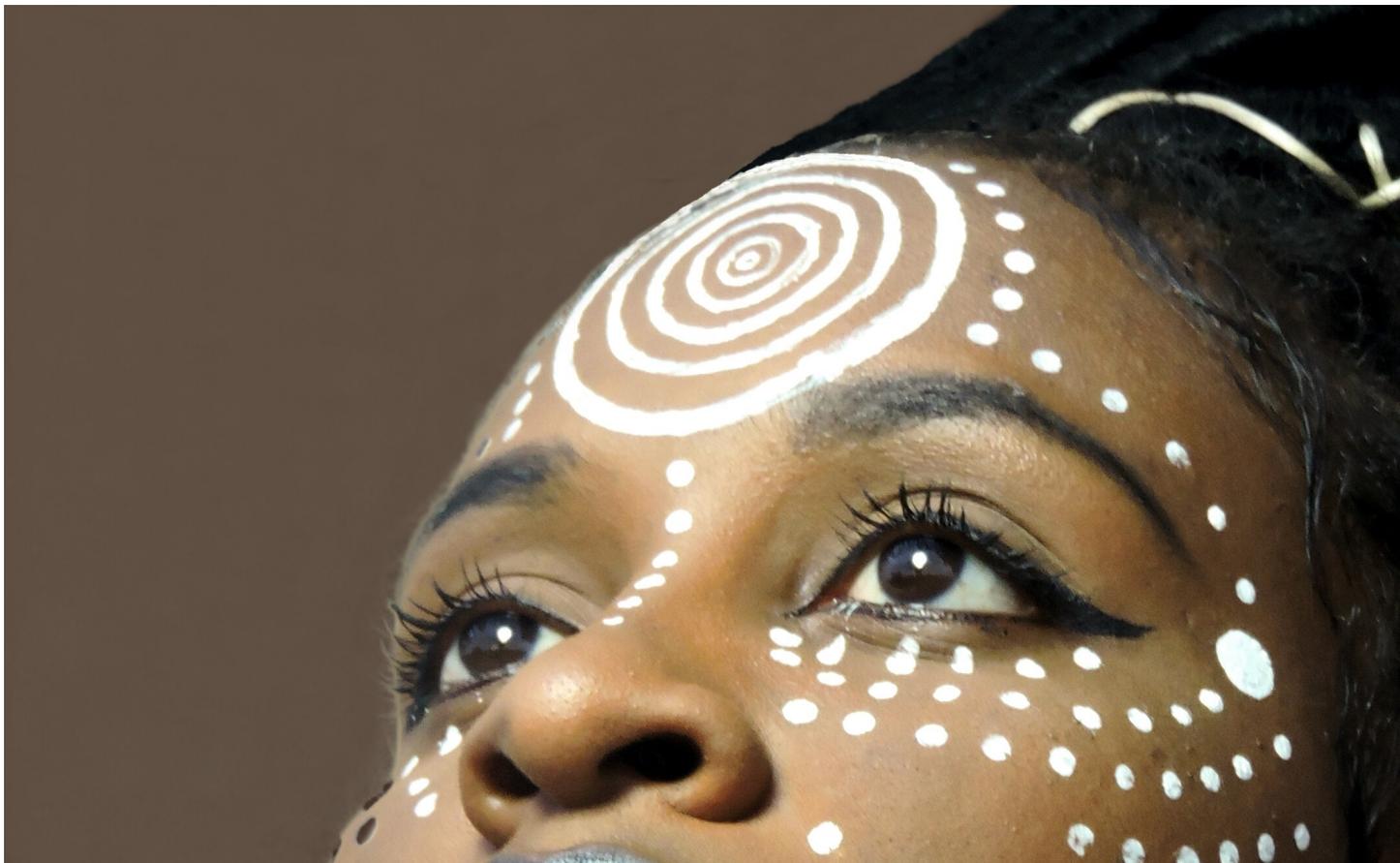
CHECK OUT "THE DANGER OF THE  
SINGLE STORY" TED TALK ON TED.COM

# MY FACE IS NOT A COSTUME



## BLACKFISHING AND BLACK FACE IN THE MODERN AGE

In the wake of Halloween, there is jubilee to dress in costume to celebrate a fall favorite. However, with this tradition comes along the appropriation of Black and Brown culture, and more importantly, our faces. Since the dawn of popular culture and entertainment in America, Black and Brown culture has been taken at face value (no pun intended). There is a thin line in dressing in costume to show appreciation and respect to a culture versus dressing in costume to dehumanize, degrade and appropriate culture for one's personal humor and gratification. Inside this issue, we discuss a brief history of "black face" and the cultural impacts this form of oppression and cultural appropriation has on our society today.





POSTMODERN  
PAINTING. Stella  
alternately paints in  
oil and watercolor

Photo provided by the National Museum of African American History and Culture: Billy Van, the monologue comedian, 1900. This image is available from the United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division under the digital ID var.1831

# THE HISTORY OF BLACK FACE

You may ask, "what exactly is black face?" In retrospect, "black face" can be depicted in a myriad of ways. For starters, the term is colloquial. Historically, the practice was commonly known as "minstrelsy." Ironically, it was a theatric means for oppressed Whites to show their dissent with their socioeconomic status and lack of acceptance within their community. According to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, "the first minstrel shows were performed in 1830s New York by White performers with blackened faces (most used burnt cork

or shoe polish) and tattered clothing who imitated and mimicked enslaved Africans on Southern plantations." However, the emergence of the stereotype predates back to Shakespearean times. Yale University Professor, Daphne Brooks, details that European colonization introduced the character to American culture, often in the form of plays at slave ports. The stereotype would later be personified by actor Thomas Dartmouth Rice. Rice traveled around the southern states where he observed Black culture on plantations and soon derived the insidious character, Jim Crow.

Fun Fact:  
Thomas Dartmouth  
Rice crude imitation of  
Black slaves coined him  
the title "Daddy Rice"  
and "The Father of  
Minstrelsy."

The morally repugnant, theatrical character became the personification of Black and Brown oppression for generations. The Jim Crow character permeated American popular culture to an irreversible degree. Its influence and impact became so powerful that the character's underlying representations of oppression, hate, bigotry, and pure racism became codified into the rule of law.

In Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer's book, "Black Magic," the authors shared an interesting take of the minstrel theatrics. The character was more than Black oppression. It was also appropriation and financial deprivation to intellectual property rights. "Hundreds of white minstrels performing in burnt cork borrowed not only the Southern Negro's songs but his dance steps, his jokes, and his simple way of speech as well -- which they distorted into what became known as 'Negro dialect,'" the authors wrote. "White entertainers, North and South, literally made millions of dollars from Negro material. The Negroes themselves, barred from most theatres as spectators and segregated in others, could seldom see a minstrel show, and at that time they were not allowed to perform in them." White men were paid to dress and mimic Black people, while those same people suffered by the hands of spectators and society at-large. The perpetuation of Black stereotypes did not stop at Jim Crow. The character also gave rise to the mammy, jezebel, mulatto and pickaninny stereotypes as well.

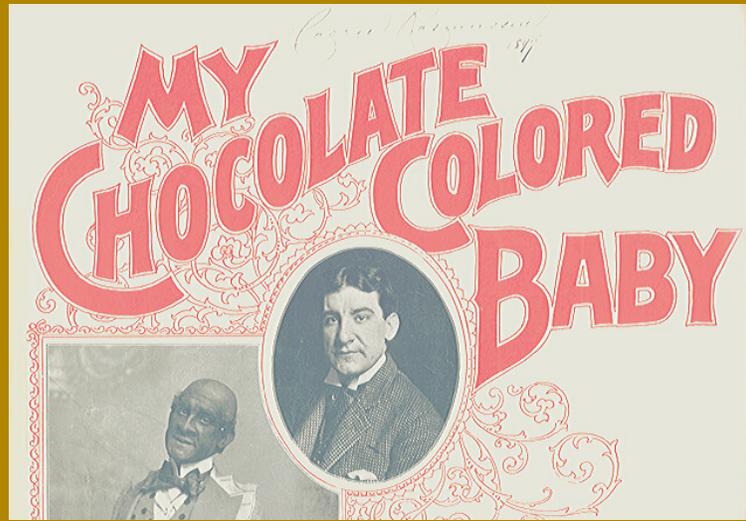
Black culture as a costume is still an issue. In today's time, "blackfishing" has been an issue for many Black and Brown beauty influencers. In 2018, debate ran rampant on social media on the issue of Black beauty influencers being overlooked in ad campaigns in favor for White or Caucasian influencers. Influencers took a stand and called out White and Caucasian influencers for purposefully wearing makeup of a considerable darker shade and manufacturing physical aesthetics, such as cornrows and lip plumping, to recreate looks that are unique to Black and Brown women. Many of the women countered the argument by stating that cosmetic tanning is not racist. However, as one commentator stated, it is not the issue of tanning, but rather, "the problem is that a white Swedish girl is profiting while appropriating black features, and that's problematic in its sense, because people love black culture but not black [people]."

Some argued that Black and Brown people dressing in "whiteface" is just as problematic as people dressing in "blackface." The most infamous case is the Wayans brothers in the Comedy, White Chicks. To that argument, this behavior also deserves condemnation. Though both acts are vile, the two are distinguishable. The main difference between the two acts is that one personifies generations of deeply rooted systematic oppression, racism and cruelty against a group of people.

The reality remains that the act of dressing to create an image that depicts a group of people is not only stigmatizing, but it is also deeply rooted in racism and the marginalization of Black people in this country. All in all, the issue boils down to one thing: respect. We all have a duty to respect each other as human beings. As change agents and lawyer leaders, we are called to have a high keen sense of emotional intelligence and cultural sensitivity. To all the goons and goblins, by all means, enjoy your halloween and favorite fall festivities. However, just remember to be conscious and mindful of the decisions that you make this costume season.



Photo provided by U.K. Metro Magazine



French Soccer Star, Antoine Greizmann, dressed as a NBA player for Halloween. Photo provided by CBC Sports



# ACTIVE IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT

## BLSA EVENTS-IN-REVIEW

As the most active student organization at Georgia State College of Law, BLSA continues to hold the torch of greatness through activism, leadership and service. Take a look inside at some of the events, programming and initiatives that are spearheaded by BLSA! Pictured above is BLSA advisor, Professor Washington, and BLSA members at the annual Black Law Students Retreat. BLSR 2019 was hosted at King and Spalding by BLSA alumna, Dawn Jones. The event is co-sponsored by Gate City Bar Association and GABWA.



BLSA hosted a career discussion with local attorneys and elected officials regarding the usefulness of a J.D. in politics. Students were given advice on the different avenues that are available for attorneys and non-attorneys interested in a political career.



In partnership with GABWA, BLSA sponsored a viewing of the "Rigged" documentary. Panelists discussed the historical implications and effects of voter suppression in today's political climate.



BLSA proudly hosted Roger Wareham, Esq. and Michael Tarif Warren, Esq., the civil litigation attorneys for the Central Park 5. The civil rights activists discussed the legal representation and civil litigation process for the Central Park 5 and the impacts of the case post-exoneration. The event was co-sponsored by Davis Bozeman Law Firm.



GSU College of Law hosted the HBCU pre-law summit for undergraduate HBCU students who are interested in attending law school. BLSA hosted a panel discussion with GSU Law students and professors who are proud HBCU alumni.

# ANNOUNCEMENT BOARD

**NEED TO PAY MEMBERSHIP DUES? NO NEED TO WORRY! SEND ALL DUES TO THE BLSA VENMO ACCOUNT @GSUBLSA!**

**11.01.19**

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT  
Our House Shelter  
2:15-5:00PM

**11.07.19**

General Body Meeting  
12:00PM & 5:00PM  
ROOM 241

**11.09.19**

Mock Exam  
Ceremonial Courtroom  
10:00AM-2:00PM

**11.14.19**

Mock Exam Panel  
ROOM 242  
12:00PM

**Stay up-to-date  
on news and  
events by  
following us on  
social media!**



**@RonaldjfreemanBLSA**



**@GSUBLSA**