

Alabama Lawyers Association Annual Report - President, Marcus M. Maples

As we celebrate the end of one administration and the beginning of another, I am writing to provide a comprehensive report of the accomplishments of the 2018-2019 administration of the Alabama Lawyers Association under my leadership. This year, ALA accomplished the following:

1. Created 11 Substantive Committees to Demonstrate The Diversity of Skill, Knowledge and Expertise Within ALA.
2. Made ALA as Significant for the Next Generation of Great Lawyers as It has been for the First Generation by (a) Ensuring that Every African-American law student in the state of Alabama is now a member of ALA, (B) visiting each law school to share with BLSA the benefits of the ALA, (c) providing a \$500 Honorarium to each law student liaison, (D) allowing law students to participate in all ALA Events & CLEs, (E) hosting the first-ever Sunset Social for law students, recent graduates and recent bar admittees. (F) placing 12 law students in summer associate positions or judicial internships, and (G) having more law students attend the Annual Meeting than ever before.
3. Trained & Mentored Newly Admitted Lawyers and Young Lawyers to Ensure Career and Financial Success by (A) hosting its first-ever Young Lawyers Seminar, (B) establishing seasoned industry experts in each particular subject matter so that young lawyers have a natural point of contact when wanting to learn more about a topic, (C) radically increasing ALA's social media presence, and (D) hosting a welcome reception for each newly admitted class of state bar admittees.
4. Engaged with ALA Members in New Ways Like the Corporate Counsel Conference and Economic Empowerment Summit.
5. Increased ALA's Membership to the Largest in Its History
6. Allowed ALA to Re-Take Its Position as An Active Participant In Issues Impacting Our Community
7. Recognized ALA Leaders Who Have Provided Significant Service to Our Community
8. Promoted Geographic Diversity in ALA & Strengthened the Relationship with Its Affiliates
9. Hosted the Largest Annual Meeting in the History of the Organization
10. Raised More Money Than Any Other Single Campaign in the History of ALA

A more detailed description of the accomplishments are set-out below.

1. CREATED 11 SUBSTANTIVE COMMITTEES TO DEMONSTRATE THE DIVERSITY OF SKILL, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE WITHIN ALA.

At the beginning of my administration, I created eleven (11) substantive committees. My goal in the creation of the substantive committee structure was to demonstrate that ALA is not only made up of criminal defense attorneys and personal injury lawyers. We are grateful for the experience of the core of our group and glad to continue to focus and thrive in those areas. However ALA must make clear to the community at large that, for every subject matter available in the field of law, there is an African-American attorney that is one of the best in that field.

Each substantive committee was led by a committee chair who is an expert that field. The substantive committees and their chairs are as follows:

Administrative Law	Honorable Monet Gaines and Angela Kennedy,
Bankruptcy	Daisy Holder and Ruby Davis,
Civil Rights	Chris Burrell,
Consumer Protection	Monique Okoye and Diandra Debrosse,
Corporate Counsel	Tamula Yelling and Staci Pierce,
Education	Lisa Atkins,
Famliy/Domestic Relations	Rochelle Conley and Janine McKinnon,
Immigration	April Pugh,
Insurance	Derrick Mills,
Labor/Employment	Kim Rucker and Sharon Hamilton Broach, and
Healthcare	Cynthia Ransburg Brown.

Each chair created a roster of ALA members that had the requisite expertise to handle matters in their respective fields. Each chair also planned a CLE for its members. The substantive committee structure allowed ALA to host an Annual Meeting with the largest diversity of topics in the history of the organization. The substantive committee structure also allowed ALA to provide 40 plus hours of CLE credit to its members. In addition, the substantive committee structure created opportunities for meaningful referrals which increased our members financial performance.

2. MAKE ALA AS SIGNIFICANT FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF GREAT LAWYERS AS IT HAS BEEN FOR THE FIRST GENERATION.

If ALA is going to experience continued success, it must be as significant to the next generation of great lawyers as it was to the first generation when it was founded almost 50 years ago. With this thought in mind, the administration put in place a plan for robust engagement of law students and recently admitted attorneys.

Based on those efforts, the following has been accomplished:

- **Every African-American law student in the state of Alabama is now a member of ALA.**

Previously ALA required students to pay \$10 for memberships. As you know, every dollar counts for all students. So instead of starting their experience with ALA by asking the student for money, ALA decided to start the relationship with a gift of membership. Leon Hampton (Beasley Allen), Danielle Mason (Beasley Allen), Navan Ward (Beasley Allen), Karlos Finley (the Finley Firm) and Chris Burrell (Burrell & McCants) sponsored all of the law students from their respective alma maters. The students were grateful to receive the gift and take advantage of the benefits of membership.

- **Between 2018 and 2019, ALA visited each law school to share with BLSA the benefits of ALA membership.**

ALA must continue to visit each campus and offer specific programming to brand ALA as an organization that is in the business of assisting law students in achieving their professional goals. I presented on one of two topics: *7 Habits for a Highly Effective Legal Career* or *Secrets from a Young Shareholder: Staying on Track to Make the Transition*. This is an easy way to connect prominent alumni back to their alma mater.

- **ALA provided a \$500 Honorarium to each law student liaison.**

As you know, law student liaisons are the face of ALA on each campus. They put in tireless work to ensure that students are aware of the opportunities provided by ALA. Prior to this, ALA had not recognized their contribution in any significant way. The honorarium was awarded at the end of their term as a reward for their commitment. These funds were made available by the generous contribution of Thomas Hampton of H20LS Wealth Management Solutions. Thomas made these contributions in recognition of several of his existing clients and ALA members, Tom Larkin, LaBarron Boone, Courtney French, Kendall Dunson and Judge Vanzetta McPherson.

- **Law Students Participated in All ALA Events & CLEs**

In lieu of doing one academic program focused directly on law students, ALA allowed law students to take an active role in every CLE opportunity provided to its members. Law students enjoyed the opportunity to participate directly in the CLE instead of being separated into their own meeting throughout the year. ALA received record attendance by law students at each event.

- **ALA hosted its first-ever Sunset Social for law students, recent graduates and recent bar admittees.**

To celebrate the end of the academic year which is a very special time for students across the state, the administration hosted a sunset social at The Club atop Red Mountain in Birmingham. Guests enjoyed signature cocktails, appetizers and an incredible view.

- **ALA placed 12 law students in summer associate positions or judicial internships.**

The following law firms and judges agreed to work with our students: White Arnold & Dowd, Lampley Law Office, Serious Injury Law Group, Hill Hill Carter Franco Cole & Black, Beasley Allen, United States Federal Defenders - Middle District of Alabama, Barganier Law Group, Honorable John England - Magistrate Judge - United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, and Alexander Shunnarah Personal Injury Attorneys. This year, ALA had participation from every law school in the state which has not happened in the past. As the applicant pool grows, ALA encourages all of its members to consider hiring an ALA intern for the summer of 2020. In addition to payment by the employer, each intern will receive a stipend of \$650.00 from ALA.

- **ALA had 11 law students attend the Annual Meeting.**

Courtney French sponsored the registration costs for law students from Cumberland to participate in the Annual Meeting. Rodney Bargainer sponsored two law students. ALA provided complimentary housing for six law students and allowed the students to serve as hosts at the registration table and at the cocktails and conversation event which gave students great access to the lawyers present. The law students also had their own track of programming during the Annual Meeting which included the following topics: *Alternative Careers for Your JD, Will you Pass? The Key is Proper Preparation, and Make Networking Work for You.*

3. TRAINED & MENTORED NEWLY ADMITTED LAWYERS AND YOUNG LAWYERS TO ENSURE CAREER AND FINANCIAL SUCCESS

ALA must take the lead role in training the next generation of great lawyers. A large percentage of our law students are graduating without a permanent position being available. Without any other alternative, these recent admittees are opening their own offices. These young lawyers need mentors, sponsors and referral sources. If we partner with young lawyers, then we can alleviate a lot of the issues that lead towards financial difficulty and sometimes disbarment.

With this goal in mind, the following items were accomplished.

- **ALA hosted its first-ever Young Lawyers Seminar.**

The first step in reviving our relationship with young lawyers was to hold ALA's first-ever Young Lawyers Seminar during the Annual Meeting. This was a half day of programming designed specifically for young lawyers. During the seminar, young lawyers received instruction on the following topics: (1) how to hang a shingle presented by Kira Fonteneau and Ashley Smith, (2) how to develop your specialty presented by Ronnie Rice, Sharonda Fancher, and Joel Caldwell, (3) how to avoid common mistakes in criminal defense representation presented by Victor Revill, (4) how to take a deposition like a pro presented by Leon Hampton and Summer Wells, and (5) immigration law in the Trump era presented by April Pugh and Monique Okoye. These topics are all crucial to the success of young lawyers.

At the conclusion of the seminar, young lawyers gathered with the remainder of the membership for a networking reception and then fellowshiped together at a Dine-Around in the Village of Baytowne Wharf.

- **ALA established industry experts in each particular subject matter so that young lawyers have a natural point of contact when wanting to learn more about a topic.**

Many young lawyers in solo firms do not know where to look when they need help with an issue. The substantive committee structure fixes that problem. For example, a young lawyer who is interested in bankruptcy could contact Ruby Davis, the Chair of ALA's Bankruptcy Committee. This will increase each young lawyers ability to succeed in their practice.

- **ALA radically increased its social media presence.**

ALA must continue to meet young lawyers where they are. In order to do that, we had a strong presence on social media increasing our number of posts by over 500%. We posted photos from each event on the page. We used social media to promote events and to drive traffic to the webpage.

- **ALA hosted a welcome reception for each newly admitted class in October and in May.**

This has been and remains a long standing tradition. ALA hosts a welcome reception for newly admitted state bar members immediately following the swearing-in ceremony in Montgomery at the Renaissance Hotel. This allows ALA to be with young lawyers from the beginning.

4. ENGAGED WITH ALA MEMBERS IN NEW WAYS.

On April 12, 2019, ALA hosted its first-ever Corporate Counsel Conference. This conference was designed for minority attorneys who practice in corporate defense law firms or in-house for corporations. It was an afternoon of substantive programming. The discussion was high energy and informative. It also created invaluable networking opportunities for those individuals and allowed additional business referrals and engagements.

The Corporate Counsel Conference was a success because of its leadership. Tammy Yelling of Hibbett Sporting Goods, Inc. and Staci Pierce of Action Resources did an extraordinary job planning and executing this mission.

A special thanks to the following presenters: Sharonda Fancher (Baker Donelson), Jennifer J. McGahey (Bradley Arant); Aldos Vance (General Counsel, Altec Industries, Inc.); Tamula Yelling (In-House Counsel, Hibbett Sporting Goods, Inc.); Staci Pierce (General Counsel and EVP of Corporate Development, Action); Wendy Padilla-Madden (Managing Director, Global Business Advisors); Jametta K. White (President, Journey Sports Management); Earlisha Williams (Human Resources, UAB); Marcus Maples (Baker Donelson); Stephanie Mays (Maynard Cooper), and M. Tae Phillips (Ogletree Deakins).

For your reference, we have included a sample of the reviews.

- "Relevant, engaging & fun - one of the best CLEs I've ever attended."
- "The program is one that I would have died for when I was an associate or young partner."

- The insight that was shared at the conference was vital to my long-term success as a lawyer. . . . I thought being “smart” was enough. I was taught to think like a lawyer . . . but, no one told me that this also means I have to think like an entrepreneur."
- Thank you for inviting law students to the [Conference]. The panelists provided a wealth of knowledge that is valuable to an aspiring lawyer. The knowledge that I gained today will serve as a foundation as I move through my journey to become a lawyer."
- "That was a GREAT conference. I learned a lot and really enjoyed speaking with the panelists."
- "I enjoyed the conference today, and I learned a lot about how to better position myself in the legal field."

5. INCREASED ALA'S MEMBERSHIP TO THE LARGEST IN ITS HISTORY

During the 2018-2019 administration, ALA entitled its membership drive "Stand with ALA." Since its inception, ALA stood for those who were historically under represented. ALA stood for civil rights and the political rights of all citizens. ALA stood for justice. Those principles still ring true today. ALA plays a pivotal role in the fight for equality on all fronts.

ALA has been and always will be the background of the African-American legal community. ALA has proven itself more than capable in standing on its own. But we know full well that ALA will be even stronger if it is not just for us. Instead, ALA must be for all of us -- all African-American attorneys working together to better our community.

Our goal for the Stand with ALA membership drive was not to simply retain all of our current members. Our goal was to reach new members that had never previously been a member of ALA. All members were encouraged to reach out to their circle of friends to encourage membership. I personally contacted leading African-American attorneys in the State. That effort was successful as we finish the year with the largest membership that we had in recent history. It is important to note that this membership is made up of law students, young lawyers and attorneys who have never previously been associated with ALA. This composition makes our ranks even stronger because we have branded ALA for the next generation.

6. ALLOWED ALA TO RE-TAKE ITS POSITION AS AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN ISSUES IMPACTING OUR COMMUNITY

During its Annual Meeting, ALA included a social action track which addressed many of the issues with the greatest impact on the African-American community including but not limited to *The School to Prison Pipeline: Preventing Mass Incarceration*, *Transitioning Black Wealth: Stopping the Heir Property Epidemic*, *Ending Poverty In Our Community*, *Preventing Police Violence: How to Assist the Black Lives Matter Movement*, *The Plan to Diversity Large Firms: African-Americans Thriving in Big Law* and *How to Write Your First Book: Authors Share Their Stories*,. At the conclusion of the program, the administration called its members to action to promote change in these areas.

ALA also offered stand-alone programs on community based issues. The Economic Empowerment Summit took place on February 23, 2019 in conjunction with our winter quarterly

meeting. It was an entire day of programming designed to change the financial landscape of the African-American community. The topics included *How to Create Wealth*, *How to Leave a Legacy for Future Generations*, *How to Brand Yourself for Financial Success*, *How to Start and Run an Effective Business* and *How to Restore Our Communities*. It was not an event designed specifically for lawyers but instead created an opportunity for ALA to connect with its community at large.

The following experts lent their expertise: Terry Smith, Branch Manager (BB&T Bank); Blair Liggins (AVP & Trust Officer, Regions Wealth Management-Signature Trust Services); Thomas Hampton (H2OLS Wealth Management Solutions); Jerry A. Mitchell (CEO, Alabama State Black Chamber of Commerce); Lyord Watson (CEO, Penny Foundation); G. Courtney French (Owner, V94.9 Broadcasting Network ("V94.9")); Chris Coleman (V94.9); Tracy Hardy (V94.9) and Bettina Byrd Giles (Co-Founder, Ensley Alive).

The event was a huge success with many programs running over because there were so many questions being raised. The event was limited to 50 attendees and there was a huge demand. Special thanks to Thomas Hampton for his vision for this event and his financial contribution to make it a success.

The administration also worked to ensure that ALA served as the voice of the African-American Lawyer in Alabama. In that role, ALA provided fierce opposition to a movement to increase the drop score required to pass the bar exam. As an early vocal opponent, ALA was able to have committee members appointment to the committee which addresses the issue. The movement was quickly put down.

In addition, ALA hosted a workshop at Miles College encouraging Lawyers to pursue a healthier life style. This event was well received and was open to the public.

7. RECOGNIZED ALA LEADERS WHO HAVE PROVIDED SIGNIFICANT SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY

As we consider ALA's position for the next 50 years, it is important that we honor those who set the foundation for the organization. With that in mind, ALA hosted a keynote luncheon at the Annual Meeting entitled *The History of ALA Told by the Presidents Who Served During Its Infancy*. All the living presidents from the 1970s were present including, the Honorable U.W. Clemon (Chief Judge, United States Northern District of Alabama, Retired); A.J. Cooper (Owner, Cooper Law); Hank Sanders (Partner, Chestnut, Sanders & Sanders) and Fred Gray, Sr. (Partner, Gray Langford Sapp McGowan Gray & Nathanson). The panel was moderated by the Honorable Eugene Verin (10th Judicial Circuit, Jefferson County, Bessemer Division, Retired).

ALA also inducted four members of the organization into its Hall of Fame which recognizes those members with 25 years plus of outstanding and exemplar service to our community. The inductees were the Honorable Johnny Hardwick (Presiding Judge, 15th Judicial Circuit), the Honorable Eddie Hardaway, Jr. (Presiding Judge, 17th Judicial Circuit); Robert Turner and William Hooper Councill (posthumous). The event took place on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at the RSA Activity Center in Montgomery, Alabama.

ALA also developed a list serve to communicate directly with all of the past presidents of the organization. It is important that we remain in contact with leaders that have done so much for the organization.

8. PROMOTED GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY IN ALA & STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS AFFILIATES

ALA routinely hosts events in the Birmingham market. In order for ALA to truly be a statewide organization, there must be geographic diversity in our events. With that in mind, ALA held its quarterly meetings in different locations around the state. ALA held its September Quarterly Meeting in Huntsville on the campus of Alabama A&M. This CLE featured presentations by Latasha McCrary, Judge Herman "Rusty" Johnson and Professor Cassandra Adams. The event was organized by Neshia Wright Spencer, the Northern District Representative.

ALA held its November Quarterly Meeting in Montgomery. The ALA's Civil Rights Committee and the Capital City Bar Association jointly hosted a CLE at the Renaissance Hotel entitled "A Modern Day Lynching". The first hour of this CLE focused on scenarios that give rise to Federal causes of action under U.S.C. 1983 as well as the 4th, 8th, and 14th Amendment. The scenarios involved discrimination, excessive force, and false arrest, among other causes of action. The second hour of the CLE included a tour of the National Memorial for Peace & Justice where attendees compared and contrasted discrimination, excessive force and other measures used in the past.

ALA planned to hold an event in conjunction with the Vernon Crawford Bar Association in Mobile. However, this event was rescheduled for 2019-2020.

ALA & the Magic City Bar Association jointly held a Christmas Party at Wiggins Childs Pantazis Fisher & Goldfarb in Birmingham on December 20, 2018.

Members of ALA, the Magic City Bar, the Capital City Bar and the Vernon Crawford Bar all meet in Sandestin for a Lawn Party at the ALA Annual Meeting. The administration also remained in constant contact with the presidents of each organization to ensure participation in ALA events.

I recommend that ALA begin discussions with each affiliate organization regarding the joint hiring of an executive director to service ALA and all of its affiliates.

9. HOSTED THE LARGEST ANNUAL MEETING & SPRING RETREAT IN THE HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION

On May 16 - 19, 2019, ALA hosted its Annual Meeting & Spring Retreat at the Baytowne Conference Center at Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort. The program featured four separate tracks of programming: Law Student, Young Lawyers, Social Action and the Substantive Legal Track. The Substantive Legal Track included presentations on the following topics: *The Ethics of Diversity After Rule 8.4(g)*, *Leveraging the Highest Settlement in Car Accident Cases*, *A View*

from the Bench, Ready to Blow the Whistle: A Practitioner's Guide to Handling Whistle Blower Litigation, Effective Mediation Strategies for Complex Cases, Recent Trends in Healthcare Compliance, and the National's Opioid Epidemic: Current Litigation Trends. The Law Student, Young Lawyer and Social Action tracks have been described in the above sections.

The academic component was phenomenal. However, attendees also enjoyed top-notch networking opportunities. The Annual Meeting included a spade's tournament which benefited the winning team's alma mater (Birmingham School of Law). This event was a first for the Annual Meeting and was well received. We also incorporated Dine-Around events to give first time attendees a care free option for dinner. The Annual Meeting also included its traditional events such as a Welcome Reception, Closing Ceremony, the H20LS Wealth Management Solutions Golf Classic, beach parties and Cocktails and Conversation in the Hospitality Suite.

The Judicial Council also held its Annual Meeting in conjunction with ALA. This provided the opportunity for more judges to attend ALA's Annual Meeting that had previously been present.

In total, nearly 100 African-American attorneys, judges, young lawyers, and law students attended the Annual Meeting. This is the largest attendance in recent history.

10. RAISED MORE MONEY THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE CAMPAIGN

None of this work would have been possible without the generous sponsorship of so many organizations. ALA was fortunate this year to receive the largest number of sponsorships in recent history as well as receiving significantly higher sponsorships than were previously made from individual contributors. The administration was extremely successful in cultivating new relationships while also maintaining existing relationships.

ALA raised in excess of \$40,000 in total sponsorships. Those sponsors included: Partner Level Sponsors - Alabama Court Reporting, Ken Perry Law Firm, Cory Watson Attorneys, Veritext Legal Solutions, Balch & Bingham, Bronze Sponsors - White Arnold & Dowd, Campbell Partners and Hare Wynn Newell & Newton, Silver Sponsors - Beasley Allen, Encompass Health, Serious Injury Law Group, Sirote & Permutt, and Maynard Cooper, Gold Sponsors - Baker Donelson, and Platinum Sponsors - H20LS Wealth Management Solutions.

A special thanks to H20LS Wealth Management Solutions and its principal, Thomas Hampton, for over 30 years of support to our organization. This year alone Mr. Hampton contributed in excess of \$8,500.

ALA provided financial support to the following groups: Lawrence Mond Jefferson, Jr. Foundation which focuses on "growing boys and girls into REAL Men and Women," and the Minority Pre-Law Conference Series which focuses on educating high school students with the opportunities available by pursuing a law degree. ALA also provided volunteers for legal clinics throughout pro bono month and assisted with teaching the constitution at local high schools during their Constitution Day Festivities.

It was an honor to serve this organization. Should you have questions, do not hesitate to contact me.