



BAA | **Black Alumni**
Stanford Law School | Association

BAA Alumni Spotlight Series

First Up: The Inimitable Amari Hammonds, JD '17

Some of you may have had the pleasure of meeting Amari during her time in law school when she was heavily involved with BLSA. As Academic Chair, Amari undertook several initiatives, including working to help demystify activities like the Law Review and Supreme Court Clinic for interested Black students. These days, Amari is a litigator in San Francisco, who has, in just a few years of practice, already won recognition for her brilliant writing and advocacy.

Why did you decide to go to law school? And why SLS?

I went to law school after transitioning from public relations to working for the 2012 Democratic National Convention Committee and Obama campaign. Being around people who loved public service made me realize I wanted to be back in public service, too. And being 3+ years out of college at that point, I had friends whose law school experiences gave me some familiarity with what joining the legal profession might be like, and it seemed like the perfect channel for my particular brand of nerd to contribute to the public good. I decided to go to SLS because I felt happiest and most at home during that admitted students' weekend than at the other two I attended! As my BLSA host Ashley Williams (JD '16) walked with me around campus, there seemed to be smiling, familiar, friendly faces everywhere. I loved that informal meetups took place in sunny Crocker Garden rather than some stuffy Oxford-looking dining hall. I remember going to Faye Deal's office at the end of the weekend and admitting "I originally came out here for the free trip" and promptly bursting out into tears. She hugged me and said knowingly, "But then you saw yourself here." She was totally right! Law school can be totally brutal at times and I wanted to be where I had the best chance of thriving and maintaining self-care while going through it.

What was your favorite class, clinic, or other academic experience at SLS and why?

Choosing a favorite is hard for me! Anything with Pam Karlan, whose wit, brilliance and

impressions of other humans get me every time, so her Constitutional Litigation class and the Supreme Court Litigation Clinic. Experiences with George Fisher – taking Evidence, TAing Evidence, standing up in court every week in his Prosecution Clinic. George is such a kind and gentle and thoughtful human being whose voice I still hear whenever I'm analyzing a Federal Rules of Evidence issue. I never thought I'd be good at courtroom stuff but I gained a little more confidence during clinic, and felt empowered and encouraged to make smart, ethical decisions even when others didn't care or thought we were making trouble.

What was the most memorable part of law school for you?

Rock climbing! I was so not outdoorsy before law school and I was very afraid of heights. I picked up rock climbing at Stanford and it's still central to my fitness, self-care, and social life. I got to climb in amazing places like Red Rock Canyon, Joshua Tree, and of course, Yosemite. I have a distinct memory of waking up to an awe-inspiring view of Half Dome after my first night camping since childhood.

How do you feel your experiences at SLS shaped your life afterwards?

Truly not trying to pander here, but I think my experiences at SLS really reinforced the value of having a mutually supportive community – family, really – of Black people in my life. I wasn't super active in my undergrad's Black student organization and I wonder how my 20s would have been different if I'd had then what I was blessed with as a member of BLSA. At SLS I always had a place to call home and a place where I belonged and felt understood. I also felt so inspired to pay it forward, and now mentoring "BLSA babies" is one of my great joys in life!

**Editor's note:* We would be remiss if we failed to plug Amari's [wonderful speech](#) at 2017's BLSA Black History Month Gala – which, incredibly, she prepared on short notice on a hike on her iPhone!

What have you done in your career and what are you doing now?

I'm still relatively young in my career. I clerked for two years, first in D.C. then back in the Bay Area.* I worked for Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe for three months while waiting for my California bar results. Then I joined the California Solicitor General's Office as the 2019-2021 Earl Warren Fellow. * After a 3.5-month vacation, in January 2022 I rejoined Orrick's San Francisco office as a Managing Associate in the Supreme Court & Appellate practice group. So now I do all sorts of appellate matters in both federal and state courts and have already even dabbled in trial work.

**Editor's note:* Amari is very humble, too, but in the spirit of celebrating her achievement, she clerked on the D.C. Circuit and on the California Supreme Court. And a quick Google search reveals that Amari's work with the California Solicitor General's Office was of [award-winning](#) quality.

What wisdom would you like to share with current students?

California is BEAUTIFUL. Get outside, feel the sun on your face, smile and laugh a whole bunch. Studying in Neukom has the benefit of natural light, quietude, and opportunities for impromptu chats with delightful people like Robert Weisberg.

“Networking” doesn't have to be as formal as it seems! Just get curious about people and their lives. Ask them questions. Be interested. There are careers and opportunities you haven't even heard of yet that are going to be a perfect fit for you.

If you could share a meal with any four individuals, living or departed, who would they be?

My college friend Katie, because we love food and finding/consuming amazing meals together has been an integral part of our 16-year friendship; Pam Karlan, see supra; and Ira Madison III & Louis Virtel, co-hosts of the podcast *Keep It!* because their pop culture conversations give me life.

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We are so thankful for Amari's willingness to be the first alum celebrated in our Alumni Spotlight series! Keep thriving, Amari; we are all rooting for you!