

Celebrating Black Achievement

By: Leandra Bouman and Shaniqwa Thomas

Black History Month is an important time to acknowledge the barriers that Black people face due to deep-seated racism and colonialism. With that being said, in reflecting on these challenges, we at the Dalhousie Black Law Students' Association (DBLSA) would also like to celebrate our current students and alumni as well as highlight the fact that members of our communities continue to make strides in spite of everything.

For instance, Family Court Judge Corrinne Sparks retired at the end of 2021, after 34 years of service, with the distinction of being the first African Nova Scotian judge appointed in the province. She will continue to play an important role in our legal system, as a commissioner and adjudicator for issues of land title in historic African Nova Scotian communities. DBLSA continues to honour her spirit of leadership and community service by annually giving an award in her name to a student who embodies those qualities.

Another Schulich School of Law alumna, and a graduate of the Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Initiative, Angela Simmonds, was elected as MLA for Preston in the 2021 provincial election. She was selected as one of two deputy Speakers of the House and is the first Black woman to take on this role. She currently sits in the House of Assembly with three other Black MLAs, Suzy Hansen, Ali Duale and Tony Ince. This in itself is another record and achievement.

The Schulich School of Law has also made tangible progress in advancing the cultural awareness of its student population, with the input of some of DBLSA's members. It will now be required that all incoming students complete a Critical Race Theory course. Additionally, the law school is supporting an initiative to re-establish the Julius Alexander Isaac Moot for students interested in delving into critical race approaches to the law. These steps, we know, will aid in shaping the Weldon environment and academics. Further, they will transcend to positively affect the legal profession and, by extension, our society for the better.

These are but a few examples of what is possible through commitment and meaningful allyship. Amongst these visions of success, we need to continue to make efforts in society to create a brighter future. On that note, we would like to remind anyone in need that there are resources to help. For example, students faced with anti-Blackness in any form can always reach out to Dalhousie's Black Student Advising Centre or to DBLSA, as we have contacts in the broader community who may be able to offer assistance in difficult times.

Contact information for DBLSA:

Email: dblsacontact@gmail.com

Facebook: Dalhousie Black Law Student Association

Instagram: @dblsa