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Black Law Students Association

5-22-2017

Donning of the Kente

Seton Hall Law Black Law Students Association

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Seton Hall Law School Black Law Students Association's 8th Annual

Donning of the Kente Ceremony *A Celebration of Accomplishment*

Celebrating the Class of 2017

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Shavar Jeffries

President, Democrats for Education Reform

May 22, 2017

HISTORY OF THE DONNING OF THE KENTE CEREMONY

Kente cloth has its origin with the Ashanti Kingdom, and was adopted by the people of Ghana and many other West African countries. It is an

Ashanti royal and sacred cloth worn only in times of extreme importance and was the cloth of Kings. The first Donning of the Kente Ceremony took place at Pennsylvania's West Chester University in 1993. Since the inception of the ceremony, it has become a rite of passage for many students of color, and colleges throughout the country have incorporated it into their Commencement activities. For the past several years, Seton Hall University School of Law has incorporated the ceremony into its graduation festivities.

PROGRAM

OPENING REMARKS

Jason Castle

DEAN'S WELCOME

Dean Kathleen Boozang

INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Professor Kristin Johnson

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Shavar Jeffries

DONNING OF THE KENTE STOLES

CLOSING REMARKS

Gina Omer

TOAST

DINNER IS SERVED



Chané Jones

Hometown: Newark, NJ

Undergraduate School: Seton Hall University
Undergraduate Degree: BS in Diplomacy and International Relations

Graduate School: Seton Hall Univ. School of Law
Graduate Degree: Juris Doctorate

"I am a brutally soft woman." – Nayyirah Waheed

DONNING: My mother, Valerie Jones.

My gratitude for my mother is best described through these words written by a poet: "[t]he closest thing to God on this earth is a woman's body. It's where life comes from and to [know] something so powerful at such a young age changed me to see the entire universe rested at my mother's feet."



Marquis A. Whitney

Hometown: South Orange, New Jersey

Undergraduate School: Rutgers University
Undergraduate Degree: BA Political Science and History

Graduate School: Seton Hall Univ. School of Law
Graduate Degree: Juris Doctorate

DONNING: My uncle, Darrell Terry.

My uncle is my rock. He has always been my biggest supporter, mentor, and role model. He has been there to guide me through the good, bad, and ugly. Without him I know I wouldn't be standing before you today an Attorney admitted to the NJ State bar.



Nakary Abreu

Hometown: Harlem, NY
Undergraduate School: State University at Albany
Undergraduate Degree: BS in Criminal Justice/
Graduate School: Seton Hall Univ. School of Law
Graduate Degree: Juris Doctorate
Post Graduate Employment: Office of the District Attorney, Bronx County

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. – Proverbs 3:5-6

DONNING: My mother, Silvia Delacruz.

Madre solo hay una. I thank god everyday for giving me such a powerful inspirational women as a mother. Everything I do, everything I am, I owe it to you.



Jasmin Crowder

Hometown: Bronx, New York
Undergraduate School: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ.
Undergraduate Degree: BA Political Science and English
Graduate School: Seton Hall Univ. School of Law
Graduate Degree: Juris Doctorate
Post Graduate Employment: Judicial Clerkship

"I didn't come this far to only come this far." – Tom Brady

DONNING: My mother, Elizabeth Crossland.

If it weren't for my mother, I would not be here today. Her faith in me is unwavering. She is my rock. Thank you for never giving up on me.



Nedda Alvarez

Hometown: Hillsdale, NJ
Undergraduate School: Rutgers University
Undergraduate Degree: BA in Criminal Justice
Continuing Education: New York University
Concentration: US Law & Methodologies
Post Graduate Employment: Law Clerk to the Honorable Kimberly Espinales-Maloney, J.S.C., Family Part Judge in Hudson County Superior Court

"Life for none of us has been a crystal stair, but, there is something we can learn from the broken grammar of that mother- that we must keep moving. If you can't fly, run; if you can't run, walk; if you can't walk, crawl; but by all means, keep moving." – Martin Luther King, Jr., April 10, 1960

DONNING: My mother.

Mom, for all the times I didn't get the chance to thank you, because I was too busy or didn't find the words, I want to thank you today. You are my hero and I am standing here today on the precipice of realizing my dreams, because of you. If I could write your name on my diploma, I would, because we earned this together. I dedicate my success to you.



Latoya Caprice Dawkins

Hometown: Lancaster, PA
Undergraduate School: Pennsylvania State Univ.
Undergraduate Degree: BA in English Literature
Graduate School: Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Graduate Degree: MA in English Literature and Comparative Languages
Post Graduate Employment: Frier Levitt, LLC

DONNING: My husband, Joe Dawkins.

We have been best friends since first day of freshman English class at Penn State in 1996. He has supported and encouraged me in any endeavor.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Valisha Desir

Hometown: Long Branch, New Jersey
Undergraduate School: The College of New Jersey
Undergraduate Degree: BA in Political Science and
Minor in English
Post Graduate Employment: Law Clerk to the
Honorable Marlene Lynch Ford, A.J.S.C - Ocean
County Vicinage

And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. – Luke 1:45

DONNING: Patrick Hobbs.

Dean Hobbs' support and encouragement has been invaluable. His support and encouragement always came when it mattered to me the most and I believe my career will be very successful with special thanks to Dean Hobbs.



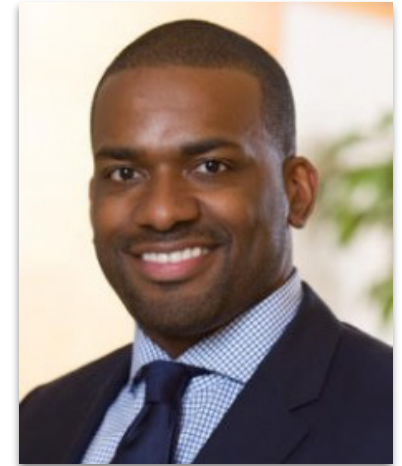
Lakisha Finkelstein

Hometown: Linden, New Jersey
Undergraduate School: Washington State University
Undergraduate Degree: BA in Business
Administration
Graduate School: Seton Hall Univ. School of Law
Graduate Degree: Juris Doctorate

“I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has had to overcome while trying to succeed.” —Booker T. Washington

DONNING: My father, Benjamin Smith.

Through many acts of love, my father has impressed upon me the importance of education, and that success cannot be achieved without hard work and perseverance.



Shavar Jeffries serves as President of Democrats for Education Reform (DFER). Jeffries began this role in September 2015, and brought with him a personal commitment to ensuring that a child's zip code did not define their destiny. From his efforts fighting for fair funding practices to get schools the resources they deserved to his service leading the New Jersey Attorney General's Juvenile Justice and Civil Rights Departments, he has been a vocal advocate for social justice.

Shavar began his legal career as an associate at Wilmer Cutler & Pickering, where he represented the University of Michigan in defending its affirmative-action student admissions programs, and also represented Black farmers who had been discriminated against by the United States Department of Agriculture. After leaving Wilmer, Shavar served as a Gibbons Fellow in Public Interest and Constitutional Litigation at Gibbons P.C., where he handled school-funding, special-education, affordable-housing, and prisoners' rights cases, among others.

Shavar also serves as a partner at Lowenstein Sandler, where he has been a fierce advocate for families seeking fair practices in funding education and ensuring that the laws governing education systems help students, rather than trapping them in failing schools. Prior to joining the law firm, he was an Associate Professor of Law at Seton Hall Law School's Center for Social Justice in Newark, New Jersey, where he ran a litigation clinic focused on complex and class action litigation and advocacy. In this role, he helped numerous clients, in both individual and class actions, defend themselves against unlawful education policies, consumer fraud, and overly broad government actions in wide-ranging matters affecting individual rights and liberties.

Shavar has received numerous honors for his advocacy, including “40 Under 40” recognition by the National Bar Association as one of the nation's top lawyers, the Congressional Black Caucus's Chairman's Award, the NAACP's Freedom Fund Award, the Brendan Byrne Distinguished Public Servant Award, and the Black Alliance for Educational Options' education-reform award.