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March 2018 E-Newsletter Student Spotlight: Third-year student Harris R. Mason

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Student Spotlight: Third-year student Harris R. Mason



Name: Harris R. Mason

Age: 26

Hometown: Ringgold, Georgia

Expected graduation year: 2018

School of Law achievements and awards: Law School Association Scholarship, McElreath Fund Scholarship, McLendon Fellowship, and Equal Justice America Fellowship

School of Law extracurricular activities: Former President of OUTlaw and Communications Chair of the Working in the Public Interest Conference and current Research Assistant to Professor Hillel Y. Levin

Undergraduate university / degree / year: Young Harris College / B.S. in Business and Public Policy / 2014

1. What inspired you to become a lawyer?

When I was at Young Harris College I would talk to Cathy Cox about my various career plans, and I will never forget her telling me about the power of a legal education. I have always felt a calling to serve marginalized communities, but being a lawyer seemed somewhat elusive since no one in my family had gone to law school before. Thanks to Cathy's encouragement and the faculty's instruction, I am proud to know I now have an extraordinary power to help those most in need.

2. Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?

I imagine presenting oral argument for the United States Supreme Court is a little too lofty for a ten-year plan, but I do hope to be practicing at an LGBT impact litigation firm, working toward that goal.

3. Who is your favorite School of Law professor? Why?

As a teacher's child, I have always had a special place in my heart for good teachers. Dean Lori Ringhand embodies what it means to be a good teacher by exercising brilliance, kindness, and just the right amount of sass to inspire greatness in the classroom and beyond. Our many conversations about law and life have shaped who I am and the attorney I will be. I am forever grateful for her support.

4. Thus far, what is your most memorable experience from your time at School of Law?

My most memorable experience was having supper with Dean Ringhand, Professor Joe Miller, and one of my best friends, Michael Baker. We spent the evening laughing, venting, sharing personal stories, and laughing more. It was truly a night of togetherness.

5. What are some activities/clubs/clinics you are involved in at the law school?

I am currently in the Civil Externship, working for Superior Court Judge Regina Quick. Learning from Judge Quick and her Staff Attorney has been invaluable. I continue to be inspired by Judge Quick's intellect, respectfulness, and work-ethic as she endeavors to ensure her court is fair and just.

6. What made you decide to join/enroll in that activity?

I am interested in working as a staff attorney or clerk after graduation, but I was particularly excited to work with Judge Quick because I was impressed by her presentation at the law school's Georgia Women Run event last spring.

7. What are your hobbies?

I had a scholarship to play on the Young Harris golf team, and I still enjoy playing when I get the chance. I do have a rule that I will not play golf unless I can wear shorts. I spent too many miserable winter days on the golf course to play in the cold anymore.

8. If you could share an afternoon with anyone, with whom would you choose to spend it?

Well if it could truly be with anyone, I would choose President Obama.

9. Where is your favorite place to study? Why?

I like to study on a couch outside the Career Development Office. Actually, I am there so often Dean Bo Rutledge has basically recognized my ownership of the couch. It is a pretty comfortable place to study, and when I need a break there are usually people walking by to chat with.

10. What do you like most about living in Athens?

I have always thought Athens is such a cool little town. There is always something going on downtown, and North Campus is beautiful.

11. What would you consider your greatest accomplishment in life?

My greatest accomplishment will be graduating from the School of Law. I am honored to soon be the first openly transgender man, to my knowledge, to graduate from this prestigious school. Still, my time in law school has been a challenge like no other. I have exerted an extraordinary amount of emotional labor to educate others on transgender-related issues. Those issues ranged from the historical, such as how to address older judicial opinions' use of incorrect pronouns and outdated vocabulary, to the more mundane, such as simply treating transgender people with respect. Thankfully, I have had tremendous support from faculty, staff, and students in my efforts to improve systemic problems. The School of Law is a special place full of good people. I am proud to soon be an alumnus.

12. What is your favorite place on campus? Why?

There is no place like Sanford Stadium on a fall Saturday.

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