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We Carry Each Other

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WE CARRY EACH OTHER

Heidi K. Brown*

Whenever I encounter a dip in my psyche, a speed-bump halting my forward momentum, a slump in motivation . . . I need only to pop into a legal writing conference. To recalibrate. To get my groove back—in writing, teaching, and thinking. The 2018 LWI Biennial Conference was a jolt of 200 joules of creative defibrillation.

I served on a panel at LWI 2018 with three legal writing heroes: Professor Kathleen Vinson (Suffolk), Professor Katrina Lee (Ohio), and Professor Abigail Perdue (Wake Forest). Our topic was “Cover to Cover: Published Authors Take the Mystique Out of the Book Writing Process from Proposal to Publication.”¹ Collaborating with these uber-creative educators and authors, and interacting with the audience—which included one of my writing mentors, Professor Richard K. Neumann—reminded me how important and impactful our legal writing academy is.

Some readers may know that I’m a huge fan of the Irish rock band U2 and its frontman Bono. (I still marvel that AALS accepted my proposal for a 2017 panel called “What Would Bono Do?—Using Legal Education to Ignite Interpersonal Respect, Cross-Cultural Empathy, and Global Inclusion.”) U2 offers a perfect lyric that, to me, epitomizes our legal writing academy: “We get to carry each other.”² We *literally* get to carry each other around—in book and article form. We *figuratively* get to carry each other in the support we collectively

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¹ LWI Biennial Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (July 13, 2018).

² U2, *One, on Achtung Baby* (Island Records 1991). Songwriters: Adam Clayton, Dave Evans, Larry Mullen, Paul David Hewson. © Universal Music Publishing Group.

provide in curriculum design, scholarship development, and service. LWI 2018 exemplified this notion of lifting one another up.

Our “Cover to Cover” panel (designed by Katrina; moderated by Kathy) focused on the process of writing, publishing, and promoting books. The goal was to support new writers stepping into the book-writing sea. Our panel’s books cover a spectrum of substantive concentrations: Kathy’s book (co-authored with Suffolk colleagues, Professors Shailini George and Samantha Moppett) explores mindful lawyering; Katrina’s coursebook defines the business of law; Abby’s book describes the judicial clerkship landscape; my book champions the introverted lawyer. We relayed experiences working with four different publishers, and we shared marketing and publicity approaches using platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Amazon, LinkedIn, and blogs. The audience posed assorted queries and concerns: copyright ownership, royalty income (does it exist?!), drafting timelines.

Pre-conference, I was knee-deep in self-doubt as I shaped a *new* book manuscript. However, the opportunity *at* the conference to learn about my colleagues’ creative processes and absorb such forward-thinking energy from the audience ignited a new writing fire in me. Every word we write as legal writing professors *counts*; every page *matters*. Conferences like LWI provide a forum in which we encourage and embolden one another to *sit down and do the work*, just like we teach our students.

After that conference session, the notion of “just one” solidified for me: if we can reach *just one* law student, colleague, or practitioner with our writing, that’s the stuff. That’s the whole point right there. *Just one. Keep going.* If we reach one person and maybe change that one person’s legal career or personal trajectory for the better, that’s enough. *Just one.*

As legal writing colleagues, we carry each other figuratively—in the best way—and we literally carry each other’s books and articles daily. At LWI 2018, I stepped into another panel session³ about successfully transitioning a legal writing program to tenure track (my personal not-so-secret aspiration). There I encountered Professor Christine Coughlin of Wake Forest, co-author with Professor Joan Malmud Rocklin of Oregon and Professor Sandy C. Patrick of Lewis &

³ Mel Weresh, Chris Coughlin, Nancy Soonpaa, Kirsten Davis, and Terry Pollman, *Converting to Tenure: Stories of Success*, LWI Biennial Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (July 12, 2018).

Clark of the textbook *A Lawyer Writes*⁴ that I teach from and tote around with me 24/7. I introduced myself to Chris and nervously joked about being in the presence of a rockstar. That moment got me thinking: we should literally *carry* each other's work into faculty meetings and committee meetings, onto planes, trains, subway cars, and vacation shuttle buses, to be *seen*. I have a stack of books sitting in my "READ ASAP" pile: *Mindful Lawyering* (by Profs. Vinson, Moppett, and George),⁵ *Lawyering From the Inside Out* (by Prof. Nathalie Martin),⁶ and *How to Be (Sort of) Happy in Law School* (by Prof. Kathryn Young).⁷ I just ordered *Legal Upheaval: A Guide to Creativity, Collaboration, and Innovation in Law* by Professor Michele DeStefano.⁸ My new plan is to plop one or two of these types of books on the table in front of me in every single meeting I attend. To be *seen*.

Bono sings, "love a higher law."⁹ Legal writing is a higher law. I'm proud to carry your work with me every day for as long as I am lucky to teach. We carry each other.

⁴ CHRISTINE COUGHLIN, JOAN MALMUD ROCKLIN, & SANDY C. PATRICK, *A LAWYER WRITES: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO LEGAL ANALYSIS* (Carolina Academic Press 3d ed. 2018).

⁵ KATHLEEN ELLIOTT VINSON, SAMANTHA ALEXIS MOPPETT, & SHAILINI JANDIAL GEORGE, *MINDFUL LAWYERING: THE KEY TO CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING* (Carolina Academic Press 2018).

⁶ NATHALIE MARTIN, *LAWYERING FROM THE INSIDE OUT: LEARNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MINDFULNESS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE* (Cambridge University Press 2018).

⁷ KATHRYNE M. YOUNG, *HOW TO BE SORT OF HAPPY IN LAW SCHOOL* (Stanford University Press 2018).

⁸ MICHELE DESTEFANO, *LEGAL UPHEAVAL: A GUIDE TO CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION, AND INNOVATION IN LAW* (ABA 2018).

⁹ U2, *One, on Achtung Baby* (Island Records 1991). Songwriters: Adam Clayton, Dave Evans, Larry Mullen, Paul David Hewson. © Universal Music Publishing Group.