

Book Review

Meera E. Deo, *Unequal Profession: Race and Gender in Legal Academia*, Redwood City, California: Stanford University Press, 2019, 256 pp., \$26.00 (hardcover)

Reviewed by Akilah Folami*

Money, Power & Respect
It's the key to life.
Money, power, and respect.
Whatchu' need in life.
Money, power, and respect.
When you eatin' right.
Money, power, and respect.
Help you sleep at night.
You'll see the light.
It's the key to life.
Money, power, and respect.¹
– Lil' Kim

Meera Deo's book *Unequal Profession: Race and Gender in Legal Academia*² provides the empirical data for what legal academics of color have professed for decades.³ We knew it was so, and Deo now proves it is so—"it" being the slights, the biases, the inequity in treatment, the invisibility (or, in my

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- 1 THE LOX FEAT. DMX & LIL' KIM, MONEY, POWER & RESPECT (Bad Boy Records 1998).
- 2 MEERA E. DEO, UNEQUAL PROFESSION: RACE AND GENDER IN LEGAL ACADEMIA (2019) [hereinafter DEO, UNEQUAL PROFESSION].
- 3 Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, *The First Decade: Critical Reflections, or "A Foot in the Closing Door,"* in CROSSROADS, DIRECTIONS, AND A NEW CRITICAL RACE THEORY 9-31 (Francisco Valdes et al. eds., 2002) (discussing the ways in which the development of the critical race theory movement and her part in it as co-founder were directly linked to Derrick Bell's departure from Harvard Law School due to, according to Bell, the Ivy League's marginalization of race in its curriculum and in its hiring and tenure of faculty of color); Richard Delgado, *The Imperial Scholar: Reflections on a Review of Civil Rights Literature*, 132 U. PA. L. REV. 561-78 (1984) (elaborating on the lack of acknowledgment in academia of the value of scholarship of people of color who explore race); see also Lani Guinier et al., *Becoming Gentlemen: Women's*

case, hypervisibility) of women of color academics in predominantly white institutions of legal education. She does so masterfully by weaving in, with the raw data, the stories and lived experiences of these academics unduly burdened by “institutional discrimination”⁴ stemming from the “raceXgender”⁵ factor that she defines and expands upon throughout her book. As a Black woman faculty member at a predominantly White institution, I found many of these stories to ring true—indeed, paralyzingly so, both at the time I experienced them and upon reflection in reading Deo’s book. After completing *Unequal Profession* and thinking a few days about my comments for this essay, early one morning, the lyrics by 1990s rapper Lil’ Kim to “Money, Power, and Respect: It’s the Key to Life: Money, Power, and Respect: Help You Sleep at Night” kept repeating in my mind as I awakened. My recent scholarly interest has turned to exploring the widening wealth gap among professional groups of color in the varying professions, with a targeted focus on the legal profession and the effects of such on mental health, access, opportunity and generational wealth-building; I suspect that is why the lyrics came to me.

While we may agree or disagree with Lil’ Kim on the veracity of money, power, and respect being the key to life, I found the lyrics useful in framing my comments on Deo’s book, and I hope she and others will as well. As those in legal academia think about diversity and inclusion in legal academia—both of which are in dire straits⁶—I agree with Deo that we are remiss if we do not think explicitly and critically about the ways in which what I am categorizing here as money, power, and respect issues matter in this profession, and the extent to which one or all serve as impediments to entering, surviving, thriving, and leading in this life—“this life” being the legal academic life.

Experiences at One Ivy League Law School, 143 U. PA. L. REV. 1, 27-84 (1994); Taunya Lovell Banks, *Two Life Stories: Reflections of One Black Woman Law Professor*, in CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE KEY WRITINGS THAT FORMED THE MOVEMENT 329-51 (Kimberle Crenshaw et al. eds., 1995); Leland Ware, *People of Color in the Academy: Patterns of Discrimination in Faculty Hiring and Retention*, 20 B.C. THIRD WORLD L.J. 55 (2000); Donna E. Young, *Two Steps Removed: The Paradox of Diversity Discourse for Women of Color in Law Teaching*, 11 BERKELEY WOMEN’S L.J. 270 (1996).

- 4 DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 8 (“Structural racism, and the related concept of *institutional discrimination*, refer to a complex, dynamic system of conferring social benefits on some groups and imposing burdens on others based on race.”) (internal quotation marks omitted).
- 5 *Id.* (“This term highlights the compound effects often caused by holding multiple devalued identity characteristics, namely the intersection of race and gender. Rather than thinking of a woman of color as Black ‘plus’ female, or female ‘plus’ Black, utilizing the raceXgender nomenclature emphasizes the multifactorial effects of race ‘times’ gender for women of color.”).
- 6 With respect to the lack of diversity in legal academia, Deo writes, “[f]aculty of color and female faculty have been underrepresented in legal academia since law schools first opened their doors. Women of color remain statistically underrepresented in legal academia today.” *Id.* at 4. After providing the empirical research on diversity in legal academia provided by a report of the Association of American Law School, Deo concludes that almost three-quarters of all law faculty are white. *Id.*

As I define the term (with which Lil' Kim may or may not agree), money refers broadly to matters that affect and relate to class and financial status such as income, wealth accumulation, and access to either or both. Power, as I use the term here, refers to an *internal* barometer of the mental health of women academics of color in primarily White institutions of legal education, namely matters related to self-esteem, empowerment, confidence, or psychological distress or discomfort. Finally, I use respect to refer to an *external* barometer of how women of color in legal academia are treated by their colleagues and students, who are primarily White and male.

Early on in her book, Deo notes that her work was heavily influenced by another book, *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*.⁷ Several women law professors of color contributed to this volume,⁸ and while these contributions were valuable in their own right, they were all the more so as part of a comparative examination of the challenges women of color in academia face within the various disciplines. In addition, in *Presumed Incompetent*, the presentation of the law professors' contributions seemed consistent with the narrative and storytelling tradition advanced thematically as a tenet of critical race theory.⁹ In contrast to the focus in *Presumed Incompetent*, Deo zeros in on legal academia to explore the ways in which race and gender show up for women in legal academia. In addition, while Deo layers her book with stories as told to her, rather than having the participants themselves present their own personal narratives, the stories are nonetheless compelling. Moreover, the stories illustrate and add texture to the empirical data Deo has collected, analyzed, and now shared—a sharing that cannot be overstated for its weighty contribution to the long-standing dialogue in legal academia among professors of color. Indeed, as Deo asserts, her work here marries the intersectional and thematic traditions of critical race theory and empirical methodology.¹⁰

Deo highlights her decision to collect, analyze, and share the data on men in academia as well, both white men and men of color, and notes the benefit of having done so for comparative purposes in further substantiating her claims about unequal treatment of men and women faculty. For example, Deo

7 YOLANDA FLORES NIEMANN ET AL., *PRESUMED INCOMPETENT: THE INTERSECTIONS OF RACE AND CLASS FOR WOMEN IN ACADEMIA* (Gabriella Gutierrez y Muhs et al. eds., 2012) [hereinafter *PRESUMED INCOMPETENT*].

8 The contributors include Angela Mae Kupenda formerly of University of Mississippi School of Law (retired), Adrien Katherine Wing of University of Iowa School of Law, Angela Onwuachi-Willig, Professor and now Dean of Boston University School of Law, and Ruth Gordon, Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law (now professor emeritus). Indeed, two of the volume editors are professors of law, namely, Carmen Gonzales of Seattle University School of Law and Angela Harris of UC Berkeley Law, now at UC Davis School of Law.

9 RICHARD DELGADO & JEAN STEFANCIC, *CRITICAL RACE THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION* 43-55 (2d ed. 2012).

10 DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 7.

shows how white male professors made a conscious and affirmative choice to enter academia with many mentors, guides, and sponsors along the way, while women of color entered by default, or by way of considerable nudging and with few examples along the way (given that most law professors are white and male).¹¹ She also sheds light on a key difference between men and women professors across race related to work/life balance. Women across the board, irrespective of race, carried most of the weight of home pressures and demands where the participants were partnered, and all the more so where there were children and their care was involved.¹²

In applying my chosen Lil' Kim-based themes of money, power, and respect to Deo's empirical and analytical inquiry, I noted that Deo does not seem to delve deeply into issues related to class status—or, as I have chosen to categorize it, money. With that said, I present a few comments in the last section of this essay and discuss, in reverse order, the other themes: power, respect, and money. In addition, as it relates to the money theme, some of my comments apply solely to Black women, given the broader societal positioning and wealth gap between us and White men and between Blacks and other racial/ethnic groups of color,¹³ as, for example, the sometimes dire

11 *Id.* at 20, 33.

12 *Id.* at 131 (“Few faculty, regardless of their racial or gender background, believe themselves to be experts in work/life balance. Yet on this topic perhaps more than any other addressed in this book, gender differences are stark—surpassing even intersectional bias.”).

13 Nina Banks, *Black women's labor market history reveals deep-seated race and gender discrimination*, ECON. POL'Y INST. (Feb. 19, 2019), <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-womens-labor-market-history-reveals-deep-seated-race-and-gender-discrimination/> (“Compared with other women in the United States, black women have always had the highest levels of labor market participation regardless of age, marital status, or presence of children at home. . . . Discriminatory public policies have reinforced the view of black women as workers rather than as mothers and contributed to black women's economic precarity. This has been most evident with protective welfare policies that enabled poor lone white mothers to stay at home and provide care for their children since the early 20th century Up until the 1960s, caseworkers excluded most poor black women from receiving cash assistance because they expected black women to be employed moms and not stay-at home moms like white women Today, 78 percent of black moms with children are employed compared with an average of just 66 percent of white, Asian American, and Latinx moms.”); Sarah Jane Glynn, *Breadwinning Mothers Continue To Be The U.S. Norm*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS (May 10, 2019), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/05/10/469739/breadwinning-mothers-continue-u-s-norm/> (“Significant differences have always existed in the family and labor force experiences of white woman when compared with women of color, particularly black women This difference in labor force participation is deeply rooted in U.S. history around race, gender, and work. Black women were always expected to work[.]”); Valerie Wilson, *African American women stand out as working moms play a larger economic role in families*, ECON. POL'Y INST. (May 11, 2017), <https://www.epi.org/blog/african-american-women-stand-out-as-working-moms-play-a-larger-economic-role-in-families/> (“While all moms are working more hours per year and contributing more to their households financially, African American working moms are uniquely central to the economic well-being of their families.”).

consequences of engaging in any act related to being alive but doing so “while Black.”¹⁴

I. Power

Regarding power, which again I am broadly defining as mental health, I was duly impressed that Deo took this topic head-on. It is not a topic talked about often, even as statistics have consistently and alarmingly revealed the continued and growing mental health crisis in the profession generally¹⁵ and, more specifically, as it relates to people of color leaving, or being squeezed out of, the practicing profession¹⁶ even as early as law school.¹⁷ In *Unequal*

- 14 Social media and mainstream media both have reported police being called by mostly White women about black people, including children, when gathered together to barbecue, while taking a nap in college, entering one’s apartment, and socializing at a local Starbucks. With the national outcry over the Starbucks incident, Starbucks appointed a chief diversity officer and closed its doors for several days to require employees to engage in diversity training. See Brandon Griggs, *Living while black: Here are all the routine activities for which police were called on African-Americans this year*, CNN (Dec. 28, 2018), <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/20/us/living-while-black-police-calls-trnd/index.html> (citing activities like waiting for a friend at Starbucks, napping at a university common room, not waving while leaving an Airbnb, mowing the lawn wrong, and making a deposit at the bank).
- 15 The American Bar Association and other organizations have finally begun to explore this deepening crisis, partly because of the broader societal attention being given to it. See Joanna Litt, “*Big Law Killed My Husband*”: *An Open Letter from a Sidley Partner’s Widow*, LAW.COM (Nov. 12, 2018), <https://www.law.com/americanlawyer/2018/11/12/big-law-killed-my-husband-an-open-letter-from-a-sidley-partners-widow/> (discussing how the pressures of Big Law and law firms’ turning a blind eye led her husband to first resort to alcohol and ultimately to take his own life). In a study published in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation and the American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs found that twenty-one percent of licensed attorneys are problem drinkers, twenty-eight percent struggle with depression and nineteen percent exhibit symptoms of anxiety. See Patrick R. Krill et al., *The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys*, 10 J. ADDICT MED. 46 (2016) (first time data gathered on a national level to address both substance use and behavioral concerns of attorneys). Similarly, a Johns Hopkins study of more than 100 professions revealed that lawyers are 3.6 times as likely to be depressed as people with other jobs. William W. Eaton et al., *Occupations and the prevalence of major depressive disorder*, 32 J. OCCUP. MED. 1079 (1990).
- 16 On the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession website, an article titled “*New Study Finds Gender and Racial Bias Endemic in Legal Profession*” (written by the Center for WorkLife Law at UC Law San Francisco for the Minority Corporate Counsel Association) notes that “women of color reported the highest level of bias in almost every workplace process in the survey and that “despite efforts to reverse the trend . . . widespread gender and racial bias permeates hiring, promotion, assignments and compensation in the legal industry.”
- 17 Erin Thompson, *Law Schools are Failing Students of Color*, THE NATION (June 5, 2018), <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/law-schools-failing-students-color/>; see also BRIAN Z. TAMANAHA, *FAILING LAW SCHOOLS* (2012) (exploring the upward trend in law schools where students of color take out sizable student loan debt to attend law school, which is in turn used to offer scholarships to academically stronger students who are often white and land the higher-paying jobs upon graduating from law school); Alex M. Johnson Jr., *The Underrepresentation of Minorities in the Legal Profession: A Critical Race Theory Perspective*, 95 MICH. L.

Profession, Deo highlights the PTSD-like symptoms that women faculty of color experience from the onslaught of implicit biases, including microaggressions and the stings of direct intentional discrimination against nonwhites and non-males in the predominantly White and male environment of legal education. Indeed, I applaud Deo for addressing a subject that has been avoided for myriad reasons, including the reality that just talking about it and acknowledging it is or may itself be triggering. Specifically, Deo references the Clyde Ferguson syndrome,¹⁸ named after a Black colleague in the profession who she says experienced considerable alienation at Harvard Law School, which some have speculated may have led to his premature death.¹⁹

If it could have been accomplished without breaching confidences, a bit more information here would have been valuable, as difficult as it may have been to investigate, share, and even to read.²⁰ Professor Clyde Ferguson was a decorated veteran, scholar, activist, community service member, and teacher, who, as some have noted, suffered a heart attack, possibly connected with the isolation and experiences endured at that elite bastion of higher learning, Harvard Law School.²¹ There is so much to unpack here, but at the very least it speaks volumes of the toll isolation has on mental and physical health—again, topics on which Deo courageously treads, albeit lightly.

Most of us in the legal community in New York were shocked to learn of the death of New York Court of Appeals Judge Sheila Abdus Salaam, who was the first female African American judge to serve on the state's high court.²²

REV. 1005 (1997).

- 18 In the context of discussing one of her participants, Carla, a now senior scholar and professor, Deo appears to define the Clyde Ferguson syndrome as “the negative health effects of being stunned, disappointed, knowing you are the victim of injustice, and yet remaining silent and doing as you are told in order to survive on the job.” DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 49; Hunter Gilmore, *Silent Rage Is a Hidden Health Crisis Among Women of Color, Fueling Auto-Immune Disorders*, ATLANTA TRIBUNE, (July 16, 2024), <https://atlantatribune.com/2024/07/16/silent-rage-is-a-hidden-health-crisis-among-women-of-color-fueling-autoimmune-disorders/>
- 19 The article Roy L. Brooks, *Life After Tenure: Can Minority Law Professors Avoid the Clyde Ferguson Syndrome?*, 20 U.S.F. L. REV. 419 (1986), provides much more detail and analysis including a quoted remark from his colleague, Derrick Bell, stating “in our hearts many of us know that the tragedy in Clyde Ferguson’s life that perhaps hastened his death was his constant conflict with racial timing decreed not by God but by his fellow men.” *Id.* at 419-20. Ferguson died of a heart attack at 59 years of age and was for several years prior to his death the only full-time minority professor at the law school. *Id.* at 419.
- 20 While not elaborated on here in the book, Deo has written on the topic in fuller detail with highlights from participants and analysis. Meera E. Deo, *The Ugly Truth About Legal Academia*, 80 BROOK. L. REV. 943, 982 (2015) [hereinafter *The Ugly Truth*] (“In fact, some scholars have tied the emotional challenges facing traditional outsiders in legal academia with ill-health and even untimely death: this has been termed “the Clyde Ferguson syndrome” after the early passing of the revered Harvard Law School professor, a Black man who endured great challenges professionally that many believe affected his health significantly.”).
- 21 Roy L. Brooks, *supra* note 19.
- 22 Alan Feuer, *Death of Pioneering New York Judge is Ruled a Suicide*, N.Y. TIMES (July 26, 2017),

Her death was eventually deemed a likely suicide,²³ a finding contested by her husband, family members, and others, who instead cried foul play.²⁴ It is still difficult for me to think about, because I had just seen her a few months before her death, and because she was a personal mentor when I entered practice after graduating from our alma mater, Columbia Law School, years ago. Media reports spoke of the weight of being the first and only, and the pressures she likely felt if the theories were true that depression had led her to suicide.²⁵ For me, while her death alone was difficult to digest, so too was the conjectured reason, as many of us women in academia know the overwhelming feeling of being the first and sometimes the only in our institutions.

On the topic of Clyde Ferguson syndrome, Deo shares the words and experiences of some of her participants. Carla is introduced early on, in the context of the Clyde Ferguson syndrome, with her dread in reading student evaluations. Deo quotes Carla as saying: “[T]he numbers were fine but the comments were vicious and I felt like I had PTSD. I went home, I sat on the couch kind of comatose.”²⁶ Carla’s reactions to her evaluations might be better understood in the context of numerous studies that show that student evaluations are overwhelmingly negative for professors of color, particularly for women of color.²⁷

With Carla’s words in mind, I would like to have read more about how feeling overwhelmed shows up quite literally in the body—a topic discussed in other of Deo’s work.²⁸ I wondered if Deo sought such detail from her subjects and decided for one reason or another not to include it. In my case,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/26/nyregion/judge-sheila-abdus-salaam-suicide.html>.

- 23 Zolan Kanno-Youngs, *NYPD Completes Investigation of Judge’s Death*, WALL ST. J. (May 4, 2017), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nypd-closes-investigation-of-judges-death-1493838517>.
- 24 Eric Levenson & Amanda Watts, *Husband of dead New York Judge: Suicide speculation is “irresponsible”*, CNN (Apr. 20, 2017), <https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/20/us/new-york-judge-death-husband/index.html>(reporting Abdus Salaam’s husband, the Rev. Gregory Jacobs, as having said, “[d]espite the ongoing investigation, some media outlets and others have conjectured that Sheila was the victim of a ‘probable suicide’ These reports have frequently included unsubstantiated comments concerning my wife’s possible mental and emotional state of mind at the time of her death.”); Shaun King, *KING: The many elephants in the room about the suspicious death of Judge Sheila Abdus-Salaam*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS (Apr. 19, 2017), <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/king-questions-surround-judge-sheila-abdus-salaam-death-article-1.3073909>.
- 25 Renee Graham, *A Lesson in the Death of Sheila Abdus-Salaam*, BOSTON GLOBE (Apr. 18, 2017), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2017/04/18/lesson-death-sheila-abdus-salaam/FfR8zKohaaSik6KovkIdaN/story.html>.
- 26 DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 3.
- 27 Deborah J. Merritt, *Bias, The Brain, and Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 82 ST. JOHN’S L. REV. 235 (2008); Pamela Smith, *Teaching the Retrenchment Generation: When Sapphire Meets Socrates at the Intersection of Race, Gender and Authority*, 6 WM. & MARY J. WOMEN & L. 53, 162-163 (1999); Joyce Hughes, *Different Strokes: The Challenges Facing Black Women Law Professors in Selecting Teaching Methods*, 16 NAT’L BLACK L.J. 27, 29 (1998).
- 28 *The Ugly Truth*, *supra* note 20, at 981-83.

I developed fatigue, severe anemia, shortness of breath, and, most annoying of all, a twitch in my left eye, which no one else could apparently see but I could feel, even, at times, when I did not necessarily “feel” overwhelmed. With pre- and post-tenure demands of being a scholar and teacher coupled with unevenly distributed committee obligations, and as the faculty advisor to several student organizations and mentor to students (and even alumni), given my reputation of being accessible and approachable, hypervisibility was, and remains, an understatement. I have since learned first to step back and decompress; second, to proactively and quite simply say no a bit more often; and third, to give focused attention to health and well-being. With that said, when Deo shared her subjects’ experiences, I wondered again when and how it showed up with them, even when they did not “feel” overwhelmed, and to what extent it continued post-tenure. One subject, Patrice, confided, “I have post-traumatic stress disorder,”²⁹ and Erin conceded, “I actually have PTSD syndrome because of the amount of stress. I still have nightmares on a regular basis even though I am very happy at my current institution.”³⁰ In sharing these stories, Deo highlights the effect of what she terms as “emotional labor”³¹ most women academics, irrespective of race, experience in legal academia. Deo makes a special note that neither white men nor men of color shared challenges with emotional labor, and therefore did not speak of or describe its consequences.³² Deo says women faculty often retrench and go silent to survive, leading Deo aptly to conclude, “[I]ntellectual disengagement from campus and resulting health consequences are not only individually problematic but also setbacks for the institution as a whole.”³³

I was delighted that Deo’s final chapter provided what I call a strategic plan of action to assist women of color in legal academia. It is a wonder that women of color in legal academia remain mentally checked in as professors and members of the law school community,³⁴ given the daily microaggressions they experience from students and colleagues alike, never mind acquiring the wherewithal to become leaders within it. With the apparent view that leaders are not born but made—a view gaining traction in legal academia³⁵—

29 *Id.* at 981.

30 *Id.* at. 984.

31 DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 47 (“emotional labor includes the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display where women of color faculty regulate their true emotions to comply with workplace norms.”).

32 As it relates to engaging with colleagues, Deo notes that men of color have straightforward relationships with colleagues and are not laden with such labor. *Id.* at 51, 53, 54.

33 *Id.* at 48.

34 Deo speaks, however, of those who do decide to mentally disengage while remaining professionally cordial with colleagues. *Id.* at 40.

35 Law professors are increasingly emphasizing the need to train lawyers to be prepared for leadership, particularly since lawyers are often appointed to positions of leadership in various sectors of society; as a consequence, a number of conferences have been organized

Deo provides in her final chapter priceless advice on combating isolation and the distress that comes along with it, and on positioning for leadership should one have an interest. One of her many suggestions is to build strong familial and social bonds both inside and outside of legal academia, a point stressed also by Stacey Abrams in her book, *Lead from the Outside*,³⁶ which I read concurrently with Deo's. Abrams provides life stories that exemplify Deo's suggested action steps. Throughout her book, Abrams shares how she, as a Black woman, embraced her ambition to lead, proactively nurturing and feeding that ambition by maintaining relationships with family, friends, her church leadership and its members. Indeed, for Abrams, these supportive spaces helped her push through the self-doubt she felt throughout her entire professional and even her student life. She tells of being in spaces that often rendered her, as a Black woman, invisible—be it in attending elite schools of higher education, including law school, leading a nonprofit organization, or running for political office.³⁷

In *Unequal Profession*, Deo also suggests building support networks within the profession. Specifically, she encourages faculty members of color to form bonds with faculty members at other schools who themselves may also be the only person of color at their institution.³⁸ She recommends that faculty attend conferences for professors of color, such as LatCrit³⁹ or Lutie Lytle,⁴⁰ which can help reduce the feelings and effects of isolation at a home institution.

Although a good portion of my professional life, before I knew it, had been sucked up in the vortex and isolation of being the lone full time and tenured Black and/or Black woman at my institution, conferences like Lutie

around this goal, including one held at the University of Tennessee Knoxville in 2018 and a later one hosted by the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University with my colleague, Ellen Yaroshefsky, and I serving as hosts and planners. The goal of the conference, aptly titled “*Leading Differently Across Difference*,” was to discuss on a granular level the issues of diversity and inclusion within the profession. Several scholars have written on this topic, namely Donald Polden and Leah Jackson Teague, *More Diversity Requires More Inclusive Leaders Leading by Example in Law Organizations*, 48 Hof.Law.Rev. 681 (2020); Deborah Rhode with her book *Lawyers as Leaders* (2013), and Anthony Thompson with his book *Dangerous Leaders: How and Why Leaders Must Be Taught to Lead* (2018).

36 STACEY ABRAMS, *LEAD FROM THE OUTSIDE: HOW TO BUILD YOUR FUTURE AND MAKE REAL CHANGE* (2019).

37 *Id.* at ix-xxx.

38 *Id.* at 144-45.

39 The LatCrit website, latcrit.org, states, “LatCrit originally emerged out of a series of debates stemming from various Critical Race Theory meetings during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The first meeting for what would become LatCrit, occurred [sic] in San Juan Puerto Rico as part of a Hispanic National Bar Association Law Professor’s meeting in 1995.”

40 The latest (18th) “Lytle Workshop” was held at Duke University Law School on June 25-30, 2024. The website explains that the Lutie A. Lytle Black Women Law Faculty Workshop and Writing Retreat was named after Lutie A. Lytle, the daughter of enslaved parents, who, in 1898, became the first woman law professor in the United States, teaching law at her alma mater, Nashville Central Tennessee College.

(as it has affectionately come to be called), as well as others like LatCrit and NEPOC,⁴¹ were godsend. As my children grew older, I was able to attend a Lutie conference a few years back. It was nothing short of resuscitating, which I think it what was intended to be for Black women in legal academia—from professors to administrators and to deans alike. An article in *The National Law Journal* noted that an explosive increase in the number of Black women law deans—a fact noted also by Deo in her book—is part of a concerted effort championed and organized by members of Lutie.⁴²

II. Respect

I have previously defined respect as an external barometer of the treatment of women of color faculty members in legal academia. Deo concludes upfront that women faculty, irrespective of race, do not benefit from the affirming treatment accorded to men.⁴³ She recounts her participants' experiences with "mansplaining"⁴⁴ and "hepeating"⁴⁵ and other behavior that undermined them as professors and colleagues in legal academia. I too could relate, particularly in terms of my students. For example, a white female student raised her hand and asked me a question in one of my larger doctrinal section courses. I provided an answer, and she promptly turned to a white male student sitting in the back of the class and asked him to repeat my answer to the class. At

41 In the *Touro Law Journal of Race, Gender, & Ethnicity* article *The Northeast People of Color Conference*, Robert V. Ward, Jr., 8 *J. Race, Gender & Ethnicity* 1,1(2019) writes, "The first Northeast People of Color (NEPOC) conference was held at Western New England School of Law . . . and was hosted by Len Baynes, who is now Dean of University of Houston Law School. NEPOC grew out of Len's profound sense of isolation . . . [M]any of our home institutions were not supportive and many faculty of color were isolated in schools that have very few minority faculty and few if any senior faculty of color. Instead of blossoming, minority law professors and their scholarship were withering away on the vine."

42 Karen Sloan, *More Minority Women Ascend to Law Dean Jobs*, LAW.COM (Jan. 10, 2019), <https://www.law.com/nationallawjournal/2019/01/10/more-minority-women-ascend-to-law-dean-jobs/> ("Women occupy the deans [sic] office at 35 percent of law schools, and minority women are more visible than ever in leadership positions. Those numbers are partially the result of concerted efforts by women and minority faculty to encourage diverse candidates to enter the legal academy and help guide their rise up the ranks.").

43 DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 43 ("Women professors rarely enjoy the status, authority and opportunity equal to that of white men working in the legal academy. There are ongoing disparities in terms of pay, tenure denials, and employment [as well as] double standards in assessing identical credentials.").

44 *Id.* at 44-45 ("Mansplaining is an occurrence that many women readily recognize from their own experience of having their expertise instantly dismissed because of the lady-shaped package it came in. Mansplaining occurs at the intersection between overconfidence and cluelessness. When men take it upon themselves to interpret for women or explain to women, they assume that a woman is simply an empty vessel to be filled with their wisdom and knowledge, forgetting that women may even know more than the man himself on particular topics.").

45 *Id.* at 45 ("[H]epeating occurs when a man simply repeats what a woman has already said, claiming and accepting credit for her original thoughts and words").

first astonished, as was he, I decided to use the moment as a teachable one to note that what had just happened was, while not the textbook definition of mansplaining, problematic and undermining nonetheless.

I will note too, as an aside, that as someone who has had a strong history of favorable student evaluations (although there have definitely been a few anomalies—I have been called incompetent, a racist, and, in one instance, a drug addict!), I have noticed an increase in such outright displays since Donald Trump ascended to the presidency in 2016. With these experiences fresh in mind, I found myself wondering if Deo was able to tease out whether a professor of color's challenge with students in the classroom or with evaluations could be connected to geographic location and the representational diversity in that area, as my law school is located in one of the most segregated areas in the nation.⁴⁶

I wondered too whether challenges arise more often in connection with certain courses taught in the law school. For example, I teach wills, trusts, and estates, select First Amendment and communications law classes, and, more recently, a leadership course and a critical legal theory course, including critical race theory, feminist theory, queer theory, and disability theory. Personally and anecdotally, I sense that there may be fewer challenges in classes that are self-selecting, meaning where the student has a choice of whom and of what courses to take, and more challenges in certain classes that are required (as with me in property) or where provocative issues arise more routinely (as with a course on constitutional or criminal law, for example). Legal writing is a required course that may render professors teaching it vulnerable—and it is usually the course in which students receive their first assignment and in turn their first grade in law school. Indeed, my career in legal academia began in teaching legal writing. When I think back to that time, there were certainly instances, usually in individual student conferences, when my competence was called into question by students surprised by their grade. One particular instance comes to mind outside of a student conference when a white male colleague of legal writing shared with me that a student (white and male) asked him to read over his paper, including my comments, to see if I had “gotten things right.”

With regard to people of color in leadership positions in academia, particularly women of color, I wonder if they too experienced “hepeating,” “mansplaining,” or behavior by others, be it by faculty, alumni, or even students, that amounted to questioning whether they, as leaders of the law schools, could or did “get it right.” If so, it would have been helpful to know what strategies those leaders employed. Deo aptly points out that while some professors of color, both men and women, denied completely the desire to take on a leadership position, partly because of experiences they had had as faculty, she also notes the self-consciousness and filter that some took on consciously in

46 Timothy Denton, *Segregation is alive and well in Nassau County*, LIHERALD.COM (Feb. 28, 2019), <https://www.liherald.com/stories/segregation-is-alive-and-well-in-the-county,112300>.

deciding to step into leadership.⁴⁷ While reading of these leaders, I wondered too what, if any, self-empowerment tools were necessary for them to function and maintain in a healthy way in such positions on a daily basis and to what extent such tools were different from what they used to navigate as faculty members.⁴⁸

In *Lead from the Outside*, Abrams provides some specifics on navigating from the vantage point of a leader of color and advises others, including aspiring leaders, to use what they have. Indeed, one of her chapters, “Hacking and Owning Opportunity,” teases out this idea.⁴⁹ She shares an example: When she was first appointed deputy city attorney for Atlanta, several white men in the office would get to the meeting before her and take the seats at the head of the table in an effort to undermine her, as she would then be forced to sit on the sidelines.⁵⁰ She said that it was through a mentor, and not a traditionally defined one often based on positional status,⁵¹ that she developed a plan of action to establish her authority as leader—beginning with sitting at the head of the table during meetings. Her mentor turned out to be the financial manager of the office, who was seasoned in the office’s politics, and who had worked at the organization since before Abrams was hired to lead it. Together, they constructed a plan that helped Abrams to reclaim her power irrespective of where she sat, although Abrams did strategically plan to get to the meeting before its start to claim her literal and proverbial seat at the head.⁵²

While Deo does not specify the navigational tools used by legal academics of color in leadership positions, she does shed significant light on the challenges many faced in getting there. Some, as Deo points out, did not even envision themselves as such, despite several having exhibited the skills and qualities of a dean long before formally stepping into that role.⁵³ Deo equates this lack of envisioning to not having seen or known of many examples of leaders of color.⁵⁴

Like Abrams, Deo speaks of the importance of mentors not only in nudging potential candidates of color to consider leadership, but also in guiding them should they decide to do so. In a podcast, Professor Angela Onwuachi-Willig echoed Abrams’s and Deo’s sentiments and spoke of the importance of having

47 DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 109.

48 Deo says some leaders experienced the “dark side” of their faculty once they stepped into leadership because they then had to seek their approval as dean. *Id.* at 108-09.

49 LEAD FROM THE OUTSIDE, *supra* note 36, at 53.

50 *Id.* at 80.

51 *Id.* at 82.

52 *Id.* at 81.

53 *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 3, at 100-01.

54 *Id.* at 106.

a mentor in her career, first as a law professor,⁵⁵ and later as the dean of Boston University School of Law. Onwuachi-Willig said her mentor, Kevin Johnson, the Dean of UC Davis School of Law,⁵⁶ helped guide her not only through tenure, but also to leadership. Moreover, and impressively, Onwuachi-Willig has solidified her belief in the value of mentoring: She is one of the founders of the aforementioned Lutie A. Lytle Black Women Law Faculty Workshop, which was first held in 2007 at Onwuachi-Willig's law school at the time—the University of Iowa Law School.⁵⁷

Finally, while Deo does elaborate on how family situational status affects prospective law professors' journey into academia, she does not do the same for deans. With a deanship position, I can only imagine the additional strains on the work/life balance that, as Deo points out, is already a challenge for women of color in academia. For deans who took on that role, I wondered whether, or to what extent, familial and marital status or the availability of family support factored into their decisions to step into the role of dean.

III. Money

Money, as I have defined it here, relates to financial status and access to income and wealth. To my delight, Deo, early in the introduction, addresses money matters, an issue, like mental health, rarely discussed. Deo delves into the ways in which women of color are not in a position to pursue a path in legal academia due to the expense related to doing so.⁵⁸ For example, Deo highlights also that even law school choice of attendance, which is itself often, for people of color, driven by financial determinants, can foreclose hiring access to some law schools.⁵⁹ From there, she builds on the financial constraints that might deter an applicant of color from pursuing a legal professorship, given the registration fees and the expenses associated with visiting Washington, D.C., the primary location of initial interviews for the pre Covid Pandemic

55 Vanessa Blum & Leigh Jones, *How I Learned 'Basically Everything': Top Lawyers Give Props to Their Mentors*, LAW.COM (Dec. 21, 2018), <https://www.law.com/2018/12/21/how-i-learned-basically-everything-top-lawyers-give-props-to-their-mentors/>.

56 Kevin Johnson, the Dean of the University of California at Davis, is credited with building a majority-minority law school factory. See Kevin R. Johnson, *How and Why We Built a Majority-Minority Faculty*, CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (July 24, 2016), <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-and-why-we-built-a-majority-minority-faculty/>.

57 At the first convening in 2007, it was not called Lutie Lytle. The name was conferred in 2008 at the conference's gathering in Denver, Colorado, at the Sturm College of Law at the University of Denver, hosted by Professors Catherine Smith (of Denver) and Jacquelyn Bridgeman (of Wyoming).

58 DEO, UNEQUAL PROFESSION, *supra note 2*, at 21 (“The financial disincentives of giving up a lucrative law firm practice for law teaching are especially pronounced for the many women of color who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and have greater financial obligations to . . . family.”).

59 *Id.* at 13–14.

hiring process.⁶⁰ For women, these initial expenses for access to the job market can be exacerbated if there are child care needs at home. The follow-up travel for subsequent interviews at interested law schools (also known as callbacks) are usually covered by the institutions; however, childcare needs at home can again be yet another barrier to continuing on with the process if there is insufficient financial means or family support.

I wanted to hear so much more on this topic, as I think it is almost determinative of the success or failure of the varying pipeline programs to becoming a professor of color in legal academia,⁶¹ particularly as it relates to Black women. Indeed, legal academia is losing potential applicants of color because of the crushing student loan debt, with Black women topping the chart with the highest amounts of student loan debt.⁶² I have extended direct invitations to former students of color, both men and women, to enter academia, but most could not even entertain the idea because they felt that the upfront reduction in salary, would have a direct impact on the financial support they provide to immediate and extended family. Indeed, some contemplated whether law school itself had been worth the expense, given their student loan debt and the narrowed and narrowing legal practice options available in lucrative practice areas, like guardianship, that have, after histories of exclusion, been monopolized by white men and their social networks.⁶³

When I entered legal academia as a legal writing professor, I took a fifty percent pay cut from my BigLaw associate position. At the time, I was already living well below my means and did not have a considerable amount of student loan debt (about \$80,000 from attaining my undergraduate degree at Spelman College) compared with law school classmates; but I did have one small child and was married. I try to think back on whether having a second income, albeit one that was considerably less than mine but covered our day-to-day expenses, swayed my decision to enter academia even with the salary reduction. When reading Deo's discussion of the challenges deans of color faced in deciding whether to enter leadership positions in legal academia, I wondered whether these were questions they, particularly women, considered as well. I know from personal discussions with several of the new recently appointed women deans of color who are friends, that finances, family structure, and support

60 *Id.* at 16-17.

61 Moreover, students discourage potential candidates of color from legal academia, but also from the practice of law, particularly in public interest and social justice-type work.

62 *See infra* note 70.

63 In my forthcoming piece titled, *The Paradox of Power: Pipeline to Exclusion in the Practicing Profession of Law* (manuscript with author), I will explore the historic and now built-in structural practices that have led and still do lead to the exclusion of women and people of color from certain practice areas of law, like arbitration and mediation, and court-appointed fiduciary positions like guardianship, etc.

were factors they considered in their decisions. I would have liked to have read more empirical research on deans of color and such support.⁶⁴

Noticeably absent from Deo's book is discussion of the hierarchical system in legal academia in terms of tenure- and nontenure-track faculty, a hierarchy that differentiates not only experiences but also financial matters, like salary. It was a distinction of which I was not aware when I entered in academia as a legal writing faculty member, but of which I became more acutely aware, especially when I crossed over, if you will, into a tenure-track doctrinal position a few years later. When I entered as legal writing faculty member, I was in for a rude awakening to the dismissal and, at times, condescending treatment of colleagues. Scholars such as Professor Teri McMurtry-Chubb⁶⁵ have written extensively on this issue—what some have termed the Pink Ghetto of legal academia—since most legal writing, clinic, and other contract positions are disproportionately held by women while overall doctrinal tenured positions are not.⁶⁶ For my purposes here, though, empirical research and related stories would have helped inform the discussion on diversity and inclusion, since many of these positions are held by women and people of color.

A distinction that Deo does make is the gendered and, in turn, uneven distribution of committee and service obligations in legal academia, which includes being a mentor to students generally. Deo gives a name to this obligation imposed on women: “other-mothers,”⁶⁷ to which I can most relate, having personally classified as being partly the result of hypervisibility as the only or one of the few female faculty members of color. Deo notes that men, irrespective of race, are not gendered to students in this way.⁶⁸ Deo shares the

64 Deo speaks of one participant, Jane, who felt that while the increase in pay might assist in hiring a nanny, which she and her partner had never been able to do, Jane was not willing to join the administrative ranks “at the expense of my kids, especially while they are young.” DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 103.

65 Teri A. McMurtry-Chubb, *Writing at the Master's Table: Reflections on Theft, Criminality, and Otherness in the Legal Writing Profession*, 2 DREXEL L. REV. 41 (2009); Teri A. McMurtry-Chubb, *On Writing Wrongs; Legal Writing Professors of Color and the Curious Case of 405(c)*, 66 J. LEGAL EDUC. 575 (2017); Lorraine K. Bannai, *Challenged X3: The Stories of Women of Color Who Teach Legal Writing*, 29 BERKELEY J. GENDER L. & JUST. 275 (2014).

66 Marina Angel, *The Modern University and Its Law School: Hierarchical, Bureaucratic Structures Replace Coarchival, Collegial Ones: Women Disappear from Tenure Track and Reemerge as Caregivers: Tenure Disappears or Becomes Unrecognizable*, 38 AKRON. L. REV. 789 (2005); Carmen G. Gonzalez, *Women of Color in Legal Education: Challenging the Presumption of Incompetence*, THE FEDERAL LAWYER (July 2014) (“In addition to their low numerical representation, women of color are generally hired at less prestigious law schools than white faculty; tenured and promoted at lower rates; and more likely to teach courses accorded low status, such as legal writing.”).

67 DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION*, *supra* note 2, at 59.

68 *Id.* at 73. Interestingly, while Deo notes that women, irrespective of race, are overloaded with student interactions more than men, *id.*, she notes that men, irrespective of race, are liked more by students and face fewer challenges by students in the way and at the level that women faculty of color do. *Id.* at 73, 76. One subject is quoted as noting that her school, through its lack of diversity, made it harder for her to establish authority in the classroom.

comments of some women law professors who said they avoided coming into the law school on writing days in an effort to get in concerted and focused writing time devoid of student interruptions.⁶⁹ Similarly, my administrative assistant is aware of my second “office” located across campus, where I spend time dedicated to research and writing because, for me, a walk for a bathroom break in the law school can lead to significant student mentoring—something I thoroughly enjoy doing, as do several of Deo’s subjects. Such exchanges with student and even administrators of color are often exacerbated when one is, like me, one of few, if not the only, faculty women of color.

I wish Deo had explored how such sizable and time-consuming tasks as service and committee law school members affect money matters. While such service obligations and hypervisibility to students cut into scholarship writing time,⁷⁰ it is likewise worth noting that at most schools publication usually comes with a sizable monetary stipend for completion. It also would have been informative to know whether these and other of Deo’s raceXgender variables factored into whether women law professors choose to write in the summer (and attempt to catch up from missed writing opportunities during the academic year, due to the uneven distribution of committee obligations and student mentoring demands) or to teach an additional class when, at some schools, like mine, the salary for doing so is more than the writing stipend. These money matters matter, particularly for faculty of color who are Black.

For Black middle-class families, of which Black faculty members are presumably a part, studies indicate that they—indeed all of Black America—are more vulnerable than other communities of color.⁷¹ Black middle-class families usually extend much-needed help and resources to family members, who are most often not similarly situated,⁷² and often own and live in homes

Deo speaks to this as being perceived by students as a sort of tokenism—a gendered one, it seems. *Id.* at 62, 63 (“When women of color are admitted into the academy in such small numbers and without meaningful inclusion, they are perceived and made to feel as if they are more tokens rather than full participants Because of this presumption, Emma notes, ‘I have a harder barrier to prove myself to students’ [W]ith only 771 women of color out of almost 11,000 total faculty nationally, women of color look like neither the traditional law teacher nor most of their faculty colleagues.”).

69 *Id.* at 89.

70 *Id.* at 58, 60.

71 Angela Hanks et al., *Systematic Inequality: How America’s Structural Racism Helped Create the Black-White Wealth Gap*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS (Feb. 21, 2018) (“While this report focuses on wealth disparities between black and white households Hispanic families have only slightly more wealth than black families The disparity between white and AAPI [Asian American and Pacific Islander] wealth is often overlooked because, collectively, their average and median wealth is comparable to whites.”); Scott Winship et al., *The inheritance of black poverty: It’s all about the men*, BROOKINGS (Mar. 22, 2018) (citing a report indicating that race gaps in intergenerational mobility are largely influenced by the outcomes of Black men).

72 Steven Brown, *The stalled, struggling black middle class*, URBAN INSTITUTE (Feb. 9, 2016), <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/stalled-struggling-black-middle-class> (“Black families are more likely to receive financial support from relatives, but in smaller amounts than white families.

in areas that are demographically Black, the reasons for which are varied, including comfort level.⁷³ Such homes often have lower market values with slower or lower appreciation and value;⁷⁴ and as most Americans' wealth is in their family homes, these families have slower accumulation of wealth.⁷⁵ Black women, often notwithstanding upward mobility and middle-class status, are paid less than White men and women, have more health problems, including a higher maternal mortality rate with birth,⁷⁶ and work longer hours in an effort to stabilize family (given the precarious situation of Black men in terms of their underemployment, unemployment, or other job-related discrimination). Black women—while the most educated group in the United States—have the highest student loan debt from their own education.⁷⁷ They, in turn, scramble

Although lending to kin has a relatively small impact on wealth inequality, the higher rates of giving among middle- and upper-middle class black families reflect the compounding problem of financial insecurity across the black community as a whole.”).

- 73 Gregory Smithsimon, *Are African American families more vulnerable in a largely white neighborhood?*, THE GUARDIAN (Feb. 21, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/feb/21/racial-segregation-in-america-causes> (discussing why middle-class Black families may still “choose” to stay in predominantly Black neighborhoods because “[a]nyone who lives in a black neighborhood can name nearby white neighborhoods with reputations for intolerance, prejudice and violence where they’d rather not go. Even in less hostile territory, African Americans find the prospect of being constantly judged by white neighbors—and having to be on their best behavior to disprove white stereotypes—tiresome.”).
- 74 Andre Perry, *Homeowners have lost \$156 billion by living in black neighborhood*, CNN (Dec. 7, 2018), <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/06/perspectives/black-home-ownership-undervalued-brookings/index.html> (“[N]ew data helps confirm that racism is taking money out of black homeowners’ collective pockets to a painful sum of \$156 billion . . . Homes of similar quality in neighborhoods with similar amenities are worth 23% less in majority-black neighborhoods, compared to those with very few or no black residents.”).
- 75 *Id.*
- 76 Kimberly R. Jacob Arriola et al., *The Health Status of Black Women: Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling*, 1 BLACK WOMEN, GENDER, & FAMILIES 1 (2007); Amy Roeder, *America is Failing Its Black Mothers*, HARVARD PUBLIC HEALTH MAGAZINE (2019); TINA K. SACKS, *INVISIBLE VISITS: BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM* (2019) (discussing how the problem of inequalities in healthcare extend beyond race and poverty—noting, for example, the high mortality rate of black women with a college degree as compared with white woman with only a high school diploma).
- 77 Angela Bronner Helm, *Black Women Now the Most Educated Group in US*, THE ROOT (June 2, 2016), <https://www.theroot.com/black-women-now-the-most-educated-group-in-us-1790855540>; Benjamin Fearnow, *Black Women Graduate with Most U.S. Student Loan Debt, Study Says*, NEWSWEEK (July 10, 2018), <https://www.newsweek.com/student-loans-pay-gap-college-debt-black-women-white-men-women-gender-gap-1016776>. In a report conducted and published by Demos, Mark Huelsman, a senior policy analyst and Associate Director of Policy and Research, writes, “Black families must take on more debt for the same degree as white students, and often need to gain several levels of education just to maintain a foothold in the middle class. The burden of student debt reaches deep into communities of color, and increasing evidence suggests that it is hampering the ability to build wealth in the ways Americans have traditionally done.” P. 1. The report found that twelve years after beginning college, the average white male borrower had paid off forty-four percent of his loan while the average black woman saw her balance grow by thirteen percent (and increase by eleven

to prepare for their children's education. Black families overall do not have generational wealth on which to build or to depend; this is partly a result of a history of segregation, the effects of which, both positive and negative in terms of wealth-building, are now self-perpetuating for both groups.⁷⁸ Indeed, studies show that the retirement projections for Black baby boomers are in dire straits,⁷⁹ as are those for Black millennials, who are likewise projected to fall out of the middle-class financial gains made by their parents.⁸⁰

I, now a single Black woman, am part of the sandwich generation, a generation in which Deo notes many women of color find themselves.⁸¹ I shouldered the responsibility for physically helping aging parents, one of whom had Alzheimer's before he passed, aiding with estate planning, and providing financial assistance when needed, while likewise strategizing to cover college expenses for two young adult children. My home, like that of others in the Black middle class, is in a predominantly Black neighborhood hit hard by the housing bubble and Great Recession.⁸² Moreover, comparative studies of wealth (not income) between Blacks and Whites in this country show that, due to the long history of exclusion and segregation of Blacks by Whites in most markets, Blacks have just \$17,600 in wealth as compared with

percent for black men), due in part to discrimination and biases in hiring and promotion and inequity in pay. *Id.* Huelsman aptly concludes, "The ability to pay off your loans has everything to do with wages and the ability to gain secure employment, it has everything to do with housing affordability, it has everything to do with child-care costs." *Id.*

78 Adam Harris, *White College Graduates Are Doing Great With Their Parents' Money*, THE ATLANTIC (July 20, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/07/black-white-wealth-gap-inheritance/565640/> ("White Americans with a college degree are on average three times as wealthy as black Americans with the same credential Among college-educated black families about 13 percent get an inheritance of more than \$10,000, as opposed to about 41 percent of white, college-educated families . . . that . . . receive, on average, more than \$150,000 from the previous generation.").

79 Rodney Brooks, *The Retirement Crisis Facing African Americans*, FORBES (Mar. 9, 2017), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2017/03/09/the-retirement-crisis-facing-african-americans/#40ba302f4f5b>.

80 Gillian B. White, *How Black Middle-Class Kids Become Poor Adults*, THE ATLANTIC (Jan. 19, 2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/01/how-black-middle-class-kids-become-black-lower-class-adults/384613/> (citing a study conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago establishing that Blacks have established less upward intergenerational mobility and substantial downward intergenerational mobility than Whites due to factors related to socioeconomic and race that affect access to opportunities for continued advancement).

81 DEO, UNEQUAL PROFESSION, *supra* note 2, at 129-31.

82 Gillian B. White, *The Recession's Racial Slant*, THE ATLANTIC (June 24, 2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/06/black-recession-housing-race/396725/> ("A big part of the reason that the recession hit black Americans so hard was that it gutted home values, and home ownership is a much more significant part of the group's overall wealth.").

\$171,000 for Whites;⁸³ it is estimated that it would take 228 years for Blacks to catch up to whites if all other factors were made equal right now.⁸⁴

I appreciated in some ways that in *Lead from the Outside*, Abrams designated an entire chapter to money, aptly titled “Money Matters,” signaling its importance. She shared her own money woes, which became a topic of controversy during her campaign for governor,⁸⁵ including how it stemmed from student loan debt and the help she provided to her family along the way of her educational accomplishments and professional career.⁸⁶ It is abundantly clear to me that as we consider diversity and inclusion, money matters must be a part of that conversation—including how it plays out in legal academia, be it when it shows up as limited access to certain positions for women and people of color or in inequity in pay.

With that said, even with the absence of a discussion on money matters, I was duly impressed with Deo’s book. Deo begins us on a journey of uncovering what ails the profession overall, which itself is no easy task for an industry apt to critique and challenge other professions but not itself. In *Unequal Profession*, Deo focuses on the diversity and inclusion issues that have long plagued the practicing profession in general and specifically—legal academia in particular. I found Deo’s work to be an invaluable and resource-rich contribution to the discourse; it provides the empirical data long missing and, as such, serves as a renewed clarion call to action with clear guidance on the way forward.

83 Trymaine Lee, *A vast wealth gap, driven by segregation, redlining, evictions, and exclusion, separates black and white America*, N.Y. TIMES MAG. (Aug. 14, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/racial-wealth-gap.html> (“Though black people make up nearly 13 percent of the United States population, they hold less than 3 percent of the nation’s total wealth . . . 19 percent of black households have zero or negative net worth. Just 9 percent of white families are that poor.”).

84 Joshua Holland, *The Average Black Family Would Need 228 Years to Build the Wealth of a White Family Today*, THE NATION (Aug. 8, 2016), <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/the-average-black-family-would-need-228-years-to-build-the-wealth-of-a-white-family-today/>.

85 Michelle Goldberg, *The Debt-Shaming of Stacey Abrams*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 17, 2018).

86 LEAD FROM THE OUTSIDE, *supra* note 36, at 109, 115.