

Alexis Jugan  
President



Daenara Burgess  
Vice-President

Fiona Murphy  
Secretary

Clint Jones  
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In the months following the unjustified and senseless murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, and the recent shooting of Jacob Blake, the Black Law Students Association (“BLSA”) at Chapman University Dale E. Fowler School of Law has received an outpouring of support from those within our community. Along with the rest of the world, we have had to witness the tragedies of a man cry out for his mother as he fought to breathe his last breath, a young man shot while simply jogging, a woman gunned down due to the enforcement of a no-knock warrant, and three young children witness their father shot by law enforcement seven times in the back. It would be natural for anyone to want to lash out in anger, frustration, despair, and sadness in response to these tragic events. We, as an organization, along with members of the Black community at large have experienced overwhelming emotions during this time. On the other hand, we have been encouraged by the recent protests and movement in support of Black lives, racial equality, and social justice. The magnitude at which we witnessed thousands come together, from different racial, cultural, socioeconomic, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds fighting for one common purpose which is to demand justice is inspiring. More importantly, these acts have sent and continue to send a message that change is necessary in this country if we want to truly achieve equality for ALL lives, including Black Lives. While all lives *should* matter, the systemic and explicit racism, injustices, and disparate treatment that we continue to battle repeatedly show that Black Lives are not equally valued in this country, thus the cry “BLACK LIVES MATTER!”

Sadly, we find ourselves confronted with what we can only conclude as a form of racial disparity birthed in our own backyard. In the recent op-ed authored on August 12, 2020, by Chapman University Fowler School of Law Professor John C. Eastman titled, “Some Questions for Kamala Harris About Eligibility,” Professor Eastman attempts to make the argument that Senator Kamala Harris is ineligible to run as Presidential Candidate Joe Biden’s Vice President. He argues that Senator Harris is not a “natural born” citizen as required under the U.S. Constitution. He further argues that since Senator Harris’ parents were on student visas at the time of her birth, they were not subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. Unfortunately, yet not surprising, Professor Eastman’s article ignited, or at minimum, contributed to a new birther conspiracy. We acknowledge that Professor Eastman has long maintained that being born on United States territory does not automatically qualify an individual for citizenship. Nevertheless, his views are not widely accepted in legal academic circles. His opinion directly overlooks the *intent* behind the Fourteenth Amendment, thus, causing his statements about a Black woman in political power to be all the more dubious. We refuse to sit idly by without acknowledging that this article is a racially charged attempt to undermine the legitimacy of a Black woman potentially rising to one of the highest positions in the country. It appears that attacking the legitimacy of someone’s citizenship when running for public office, is solely reserved for people of color.

As individuals in the legal profession, we must be unwavering in our stance against racist rhetoric. To separate Professor Eastman's narrative from its racial implications is to ignore that the legal profession is an inherently racist discipline. His argument is not made because there are

questions of citizenship. Let's be clear, there is no question as to Senator Harris's citizenship. This "opinion" piece is nothing more than a failed attack on Senator Harris because she is a person of color – more specifically, a Black woman.

We want to thank Newsweek for doing the right thing and condemning this type of inaccurate, racist, and ignorant "opinion." We would also like to thank the numerous professors for rejecting this narrative through offering academically sound arguments. We hope that the University of Chapman Dale E. Fowler School of Law will do the same in the near future.

America has come a long way from the nation that grew to prosperity by capitalizing on African American slave labor, however, we still have a long way to go. An unfortunate parallel exists at Chapman University. Although the university's diversity initiatives implemented during the past few years are to be applauded, there is much more work to be done. Therefore, we urge the administration, faculty, staff, and our fellow students to stand with us and continue the fight for equality and justice. We urge you to speak up when you see injustice. We urge you to not stay silent and turn a blind eye to racism because that is the easy thing to do. If we have learned anything during our legal studies, or in our burgeoning careers as legal professionals, it is that to earn respect within our profession we must be unwavering in our resolve and be willing to face each challenge placed in our paths. We are the present and the future. We must advocate for those who have been silenced. It is OUR job to be the change we want to see. We can only hope that our allies will continue to condemn racism in all its forms and support their fellow students. **Let us stand together and ensure our community can be a safe place for everyone.**

-The Black Law Students Association at Chapman Dale E. Fowler School of Law