

Candid

Hear Her Voice

Chinyere Okogeri '21 uses her leadership gifts to make a difference.

INTERVIEW BY ELAINE LEE '22

Growing up, I wanted to be a doctor and a lawyer. Truly, I just wanted to make a difference by helping others, which I felt could be accomplished in both professions. This led me to pursue an undergraduate degree in behavioral neuroscience and to do a medical service trip, where I worked for Nicaraguan doctors in La Naranja.

Through subsequent peer counseling and teaching engagements, I also learned the importance of finding your voice and using that voice to advocate for yourself and others. I've carried these lessons into law school and have incorporated them in my leadership positions with LAHANAS and BLSA, and in my roles as a student attorney in the Innocence Clinic and on the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce.

I see my role as an advocate whose sole responsibility is to make sure that those not at the table—which tends disproportionately to be those of diverse identities—have their voices heard and amplified. As Verna Myers says, "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." Equity is having the tools you need to dance so you don't make a fool of yourself.

I'm motivated to do what I do by family and the people I have had the privilege to work for. We often talk about privilege as characterized by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, body type, and more. But privilege is actually opportunity, and not everyone has opportunity. I am still constantly learning from others and checking my own biases because we all can be better allies and advocates for the communities we have the privilege to serve and support.

Change is a living constitution. It requires readjustment and critical thinking. I welcome change, especially if it means eradicating or reforming systems that do not serve us and, quite frankly, harm many of us. Just like seasons and zodiac signs change, the beliefs held by society change, and that change is not always bad. So, if change from tradition allows for the inclusion, growth, and comfort of marginalized identities, then we must make space for those conversations and adapt accordingly.

STUDENT SNAPSHOT

Provenance Born in Manhattan, raised in Queens. **Learning** BA in Neuroscience and Minor in Women's Studies, Colgate University. Study abroad, Queen Mary University of London. **Pre Law** Algebra instructor, 1881 Research Institute in New Orleans; investigative intern, Georgetown Law Criminal Justice Clinic; summer legal intern, Domestic Violence Bureau, Queens District Attorney's Office. **At BC Law** Gulf Coast Recovery and Spring Break Pro Bono trips; leadership in Black Law Students' Association and LAHANAS; and member of BC Law Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce. **Thought to Live By** "Don't let someone dim your light/brightness, simply because it's shining in their eyes." **Quarantine Pastime** Painting. **Fun Fact** At Colgate, had a radio show segment titled "AfroVibes" and hosted a podcast with friends.



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