Goal: Public Service

By Reginald Parson ’19

My first year at Maine Law was a mix of triumph and struggle. The two hard realities I learned were that the law was not as black and white as I thought, and the first year of law school is a complete mystery. It was like walking through the wilderness for nine months without knowing what to expect, never knowing how it would end.

After going through this experience, the reward for me was that I now have what it takes to be successful in law school. I can use the foundation of the first year and build upon it in the classroom – and in experiential learning outside of the classroom – going forward.

I’m a native of Chicago, Illinois. Prior to coming to Maine Law, I attended Marian University in Wisconsin, earning a bachelor’s degree in Homeland Security with minors in Criminal Justice and Pre-Law. After graduation in 2013, I interned for the 40th governor of Illinois, Pat Quinn, in the Office of Constituent Affairs, and briefly with the Illinois State Police.

I returned to Wisconsin to obtain a graduate degree in Public Administration from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. There, I was involved on campus in many facets and in local government, serving as a member of the City of Oshkosh Board of Zoning Appeals.

I chose Maine Law because of its strong history and reputation for public interest. The fact that I could attend law school and at the same time be near so many opportunities in Portland and beyond for experiential learning sealed the deal on Maine Law as the place for me.

As an intern with the Portland Housing Authority (PHA) in the Public Housing Unit, I’ve reviewed and drafted amendments to their policies, providing clarity to some of the language related to the definition of “criminal activity” when screening applicants for public housing. Also, in March of this year, I was appointed by the Portland City Council and subsequently sworn in to serve on the City of Portland Police Citizens Review Subcommittee. The subcommittee is tasked with reviewing the process of Portland Police Department’s Internal Affairs investigative methods and procedures for citizen complaints against police officers, to ensure the process is thorough, objective, fair, and timely.

My studies will be focused on public interest law. I am a public servant, and I am devoting my career to public service. I’m looking forward to taking classes that examine the impact of the law on people and its influence on governing bodies that influence public policy. All of this is possible at Maine Law.

“I am a public servant and I am devoting my career to public service.”

- Reginald Parson ’19
Goal: Prosecutor

By Michael Miller ’19

In high school, I remember having this passion to become a lawyer, but at the time I didn’t know how to navigate the path to law school, nor did I have enough confidence in myself to believe I had what it would take to do it.

I gave up that dream and went with option two, the Army, because they promised to pay for college tuition. I couldn’t have known that decision would ultimately reshape my views on life and provide me with the confidence to take on any challenge I would later face.

My first challenge came in 2007. I deployed to Afghanistan, where I built bonds stronger than most people will ever experience in a lifetime, endured the pain of losing several close friends, and triumphed over sure death several times. One of those occasions was a 17-hour firefight. We fought for the lives of every man on our team. Outmanned and outgunned, two of us were wounded. We never gave up; we pushed back the assault again and again.

My second challenge involved a loss at home. In 2010, my best friend passed away.

I met my best friend when I was 10. I had a disturbing childhood. My best friend never judged me; instead he encouraged me. He seemed flawless – always naturally talented, athletic, smart, and tough. He preceded the Army in teaching me never to give in. He was wise for someone so young. He would routinely impress upon me that I would never know what I was truly capable of if I never tried, even if it was hard and I didn’t get it right at first. He helped me distinguish between a failed effort versus quitting or, worse, not trying. Most important, he helped me feel, at times, triumphant.

In 2014, I felt triumphant when I earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice. I reflected back to when I was a child and my thinking at that time, which was that people like me don’t go to college, much less, law school. I am indebted to my best friend and to the U.S. Army for showing me that I am truly capable.

I returned to Maine because my roots are here. I chose Maine Law because I knew it was a place where I would continue to thrive. At Maine Law, I have a community I care about and that cares about me. From faculty, staff, and friends to colleagues and alumni, I have strong personal and professional networks on which I can trust and depend. From these networks, I have prospects and opportunities that are second to none. My goal is to become a prosecutor and to one day lead my own firm focusing on securing for veterans the rights and benefits they deserve. Already, Maine Law has helped me secure an internship with the Cumberland County District Attorney. Maine Law is my law school and my community. I will demonstrate my thanks by serving as a member of the legal profession in Maine.

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- Michael Miller ’19