



NCBP 2022 – 2023 Diversity Scholar Feature



Aja Brooks

Secretary/Treasurer, State Bar of New Mexico
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Aja Brooks attended Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C. (B.A., 2005) and the University of New Mexico School of Law (J.D., 2008). She is currently employed at the United States Attorney's Office for the District of New Mexico as the Executive Assistant United States Attorney. Prior to that, she was the Director of the Center for Self-Help and Dispute Resolution at the Second Judicial District Court. She has worked as the Pro Bono Coordinator for New Mexico Legal Aid's Volunteer Attorney Program and as a Public Defender.

Aja is involved in many legal groups and activities, including serving as the current secretary/treasurer of the State Bar of New Mexico and as a member of its Committee on Diversity in the Legal Profession and Bridge the Gap Mentorship Program. Additionally, she serves as president of the New Mexico Black Lawyers Association, secretary of Region X of the National Bar Association, and as a Board member of the New Mexico Black Central Organizing Committee. She is a proud member of the Iota Xi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

1. What have you learned about yourself through participation in the Diversity Scholars program?

My participation in the Diversity Scholars program has shown me that I am not alone in this work! Bar leadership is personally rewarding, but not always easy. Through participation in this program, I was able to meet my fellow Diversity Scholars- first virtually, and then in person- at the Annual meeting in Chicago. We were able to share our stories and experiences as well as our achievements and challenges. I have been involved in many different programs over the years, and this one has been the most beneficial to my long-term planning process. I have learned so much from my fellow Scholars and program mentors and look forward to using this knowledge to improve our Bar programs and initiatives in New Mexico.

2. What would you say to encourage others to apply and participate in the Diversity Scholars Program?

The Diversity Scholars program provides you with the unique opportunity to meet and share ideas with other Bar leaders. I appreciate that the program truly celebrates diversity; it brings people together from different cultures and backgrounds to learn from one another with the shared goal of improving our organizations and communities. As a Diversity Scholar, I was able to serve as a facilitator for the “Together we Dine” luncheon that was held at the Mid-Year Meeting in New Orleans. The Bar leaders whose discussion I was able to facilitate were from all over the country, all walks of life. However, the event created a space for understanding despite these differences. It was space to be present, to listen and to learn without judgement. I believe those who participated brought something away from it without the defensiveness or anger that usually accompanies discussions about race. I would not have had that experience but for my being a Diversity Scholar, and that is just one example!

3. Why is DEI important to you and why should it be important to bar leaders?

Bar leaders should care about DEI work because is vital to the functioning of our Bar and our profession. The beauty of DEI is the idea that our differences should be celebrated and that they actually bring us closer to achieving a just society. This is important to me because this notion of justice is what inspired me to become an attorney.