

Rachel Peterson doesn't have a hometown. Born in Friend, Nebraska, a small community south of Lincoln where her father was a youth pastor, Peterson lived in twenty different houses before she turned eighteen — most of them in West Africa.

After moving with his wife and young daughter to Grand Rapids, Minnesota, Peterson's father accepted a call to serve in Liberia. By the time she turned sixteen, Peterson and her family, which had expanded to include two younger sisters, had also lived in Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon.

During the fourteen years she lived in Africa, Peterson says, she gained first-hand experience in cross-cultural communications while living in a mix of urban and rural areas, including the bush country of Liberia and Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea. While living in Equatorial Guinea for six years, she became proficient in conversational Spanish, one of the country's two official languages.

Home-schooled and "not on the Internet as early as most people my age," Peterson returned to the Midwest to attend Northern Michigan University in Marquette, graduating with a B.A. in political science in 2004.

"By the time I graduated, I knew the only career I was interested in, the only one that engaged and challenged me, was law," she says. However, Peterson didn't start law school right away. Instead, she and her husband moved to Madison and she worked as marketing director for Campus for Kids Learning Center, supporting him while he earned a master's degree in social work.

Then Peterson and her husband moved to Chicago, where she worked for a supply company for a year. "But the longer I stayed out of school, the more eager I was to enroll," she says. "After taking some law classes as an undergraduate,

I knew I wanted to be a litigator. I'm interested in learning ways of approaching a problem, as well as becoming an effective advocate."

Peterson says one of her reasons for choosing to return to Madison for law school was the UW Law School's emphasis on the collegial nature of its student body. "The administration works hard to provide lots of social networking opportunities and ways to make you feel part of a larger whole, instead of a collection of competing individuals," she explains. "During Welcome Week, Law School professors talked to students about cooperation, working together, and the Wisconsin Experience — and it's clear the administration thinks it is important, too."

A Moot Court board member, Peterson has also been an active participant in American Model United Nations, Inc., a nonprofit educational organization founded in 1989 to provide students with high-quality, professionally-run simulations of the United Nations. She has been an on-staff member of the organization since 2002. "It's something I'm really committed to, and something I really enjoy," she explains. "It's a way to pay forward for my international experiences."

Peterson will pursue her interest in litigation this summer at a prime location for this work: she has been chosen as a summer associate by Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP in New York City. She expects her future to include human rights litigation as well, possibly as pro bono work.

While she is open to the possibility of working overseas after she graduates in 2010, Peterson finds the opportunity to settle down in one place to be particularly appealing. "Because I've moved so much," she says, "I'm not interested in returning to a tumbleweed lifestyle."

— *Nadine Goff*



BRIAN EBNER

Rachel Peterson '10

The daughter of missionaries, Rachel grew up in West Africa in a series of diverse communities, both urban and rural. She developed a love of travel and a strong interest in international affairs and social justice. Home-schooled until she entered college, she went on to be an outstanding student in her undergraduate years and in law school. Later this year, she will have a chance to practice her litigation skills at Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York City, where she has been named a summer associate.

Hometown: Several communities in West Africa

Undergraduate Institution: Northern Michigan University

Undergraduate Major: Political Science



Dan Lewerenz '10

Dan came to law school after a ten-year career as a reporter and editor for The Associated Press, and while studying for his law degree he is simultaneously earning a master's in journalism at UW-Madison. A member of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas & Nebraska, he developed a special interest in tribal law through his experiences as a journalist. This summer he will work at two firms with Indian law practices: Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker in Washington, D.C., and Faegre & Benson in Boulder, Colorado.

Hometown: Salina, Kansas

Undergraduate Institution: Kansas State University

Undergraduate Major: Philosophy

Dan Lewerenz knew he wanted to study American Indian law and policy, but his road to law school included a long detour into journalism. The life experience he gained along the way helped him to clarify what he wanted to accomplish when he returned to school.

A second-year law student, Lewerenz is also working on a master's degree in journalism. He hopes to earn both degrees in three years, thanks to previous graduate coursework at Pennsylvania State University and to his willingness to carry a heavy course load every semester.

An enrolled member of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas & Nebraska, Lewerenz says his career in journalism was the result of a "big series of accidents" that began when he was an undergraduate at Kansas State University and joined the editorial board of the student newspaper. This led to a weekly column, then to a stint as sports editor. When The Associated Press (AP) needed a local student representative, they tapped Lewerenz for the job.

After graduating, Lewerenz accepted a temporary, entry-level position with the AP in Kansas City, Missouri. Ten years and several moves later, he was still with the AP, working in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Along the way, he developed an interest in a specialized area of Indian law.

"As an Indian journalist for many years, I learned about the challenges facing many Indian journalists," says Lewerenz. Indian tribes have a unique status in relation to the federal government, he explains. Since tribal governments are not party to the U.S. Constitution, First Amendment rights to a free press are not applicable on Indian reservations. The Indian Civil Rights Act bars tribes from infringing freedom of the press, but leaves it to tribes to define and enforce the law. "A lot of media that serve reservations are tribal-owned," says Lewerenz. "So what happens to government non-

interference with the press when the government owns the press?" He hopes to work with tribes to develop culturally relevant ways to protect press freedom in Indian Country.

Because of his interest in tribal governance, Lewerenz chose the UW Law School partly because Professor Richard Monette, who teaches Indian law, had also served as Chairman and CEO of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

"The other things that brought me to Wisconsin," Lewerenz says, "were the excellent reputation of the UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the university's support for interdisciplinary programs and willingness to let students create their own individualized programs." For his master's thesis in the Journalism School, Lewerenz is studying the relationship between tribal governments and tribal media.

Despite his heavy course load, Lewerenz makes time for extracurricular activities. He serves as articles editor for the *Wisconsin Journal of Law, Gender & Society* and community liaison for the Indigenous Law Students Association.

Last summer, Lewerenz was an associate at Faegre & Benson in Denver, working on a wide variety of topics. This year he will be a summer associate at two firms that have Indian law practices: Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker, LLP in Washington, D.C., and Faegre & Benson's office in Boulder, Colorado.

Lewerenz hasn't decided where he will be working after he graduates. "Many law school graduates focus on location and are open about what they want to do when they get there, but I know what I want to do and am open to many locations," he explains. "What I do know for sure is I'll always be an Indian and I'll always be a lawyer."

— Nadine Goff

The numerous stamps on Melanie Black's passport are not souvenirs of sightseeing and shopping trips. Rather, they are evidence of her sustained commitment to pursuing a career in law and public policy, with a special emphasis on human rights.

A Wisconsin native who grew up in Lake Geneva, Black received a scholarship to participate in an exchange program in Osaka, Japan, while she was a student at Badger High School. By the time she graduated, Black had begun to think about attending law school; she knew she wanted both a law degree and a master's degree in international relations.

In pursuit of her goals, she enrolled at UW-Madison, where she earned a B.A. in political science and international relations in 2004. As part of a Junior Year Abroad program, she worked as a legal intern at the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva, Switzerland, and observed the war-crimes trial of former Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević.

The next stop on Black's career path was England, where she earned a master's degree in government-global politics from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). While a student at LSE, Black worked for several months as a legal intern at the Kurdish Human Rights Project, providing legal research and support for cases before the European Court of Human Rights.

"Working at the Kurdish Human Rights Project is what really convinced me to go to law school," says Black. "I saw what law could do for people in certain situations and knew that if I wanted a career in human rights, law school was the way to go."

Although in-state tuition was certainly a factor, she was also drawn back to Madison by the Law School's growing human rights

emphasis, its public interest tradition, its support of the *Wisconsin International Law Journal*, and the opportunity to study with Professor Heinz Klug, who is also Director of the Global Legal Studies Center. Another important factor in her decision was the knowledge that the Law School "gives students lots of opportunities to create our own opportunities."

After spending the summer of 2007 as a legal intern at the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest, Hungary, Black spent last summer in Washington, D.C., as a summer law clerk for the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight. She drafted memoranda for hearings on issues such as the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay prison, international treaty obligations, and the Iraq War.

Her experience in Washington and in community service activities convinced Black to change her focus. "My favorite experience as a Law School student was working with the Student Hurricane Network during Spring Break 2007," she explains. "We went to Mississippi to work with people affected by Katrina, and this is when I changed my human rights focus from international to domestic."

Right now, Black is particularly interested in legislation and the creation of law, but one day people may be addressing her as "Madam Secretary." During Black's senior year in high school, her teacher for Contemporary American History had students participate in a simulation of the presidential cabinet. "My role was Secretary of State, and ever since then I've wanted to be Secretary of State," she smiles. "It's definitely a building process."

— Nadine Goff



BRIAN EBNER

Melanie Black '09

Before Melanie entered law school, her strong interest in the world beyond the United States took her to Japan, Switzerland, and England. Her focus on human rights led her to work in London at the Kurdish Human Rights Project, where she was a legal intern and discovered her interest in law. As a law student, she has spent summers working at the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest and with a U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs subcommittee.

Hometown: Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

Undergraduate Institution: University of Wisconsin-Madison

Undergraduate Major: Political Science and International Relations

Graduate Degree: Master of Science in Government-Global Politics, London School of Economics and Political Science