

An Interview With Crystal D. Peralta, Esq.

by Nicole P. Dyszlewski, Esq., MLIS and Meghan L. Hopkins, Esq.

Focus on the Future is a spotlight series where members of the *Rhode Island Bar Journal* Editorial Board interview attorneys who are newer to the Rhode Island Bar.

> **What is your current title and position?**

I am a Litigation Associate at Adler Pollock Sheehan P.C.

> **What do you actually do all day?**

It depends! What I do on any given day depends on what type of project I am working on and who I am working with. I spend the majority of my time researching and drafting motions, memoranda, written discovery, and various other pleadings. I also regularly discuss litigation strategy and goals with clients, and correspond frequently with opposing counsel and other attorneys at my firm. Most recently, I drafted a complaint involving a dispute amongst members of an LLC and testified at the State House in my role as a registered lobbyist on behalf of one of the firm's clients.

> **What are some of your long-term goals?**

When I retire, I want to own a coffee shop/bakery with a focus on Latino pastries. In the meantime, my next career goal is to argue (and win) a motion.

> **Have you had any celebrity sightings in the course of your career as an attorney that you can share with us today?**

Not yet, but I did meet Justice Sotomayor once before I started law school.

> **Can you tell us one thing you have learned while being a new attorney?**

I've learned so many things! Being new to the practice of law, I feel like I am a 1L again. Because the practice of law is different from law school, much of a young attorney's time is spent learning and honing a whole new set of skills. So one thing I've definitely learned as a new attorney is to simply be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

I've also learned about the importance of mentorship. I'm grateful to have an amazing mentor at my firm (you're the best, Hamza!), and fortunate to be able to give back and mentor law students and new attorneys of color. I have been so inspired by the outpouring of support I receive from law students who consistently affirm how happy they are to see someone who looks like them employed as an attorney in a prestigious law firm. These moments further solidify my belief that law firms must have diverse attorneys among their ranks. It's important, to me personally and for the legal profession as a whole, that our future attorneys of color see themselves represented in all places and at all levels in the legal field.

The last thing I've learned as a new attorney is the importance and power of simply being kind—a sometimes forgotten trait in the often-times sharp-elbowed practice of law.

> **Based on your experiences, how can firms continue to diversify the hiring process?**

I think it is critical for law firms to diversify their hiring criteria and



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lessen the importance placed on GPA, class rank, and participation in law journals and moot court. Implementing a model that considers not only the candidate's ability, but also personality traits and other intangible things a candidate brings to the table, will help attract diverse candidates. It is also important for law firms to reflect a commitment to diversity within the firm itself. A firm should have formal programs to mentor diverse attorneys, ensure that diverse attorneys are well-represented at the partnership level, and make efforts to ensure they are retaining the diverse candidates they hire.

> **We have done a few of these interviews now and several of the new attorneys we have talked to mention the value of having a good reputation, even early on in your legal career. Have you thought much about this issue yet?**

Yes. As a junior associate, I think about it a lot within the context of my own firm. Am I perceived as bright? Kind? A hard worker? A team player? How do my colleagues perceive the quality of my work and my commitment to both the firm and excellence in the practice of law? To rise within a firm you need to be smart and competent, but you also need advocates within the firm to champion your work. I am always mindful of how my reputation precedes



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Continued on next page

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