Charity Scott – A Masterful Teacher

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In 2006, the University of Maryland Carey School of Law had the privilege of co-hosting the annual Health Law Professors Conference with the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics (ASLME). Coincidentally, as director of the Law & Health Care Program at Maryland, I had the opportunity to announce the winner of the Jay Healey Health Law Teachers' Award at the conference. The award is given to "professors who have devoted a significant portion of their career to health law teaching and whose selection would honor Jay [Healey's] legacy through their passion for teaching health law, their mentoring of students and/or other faculty and by their being an inspiration to colleagues and students."[1] Healey, a Professor in the Humanities Department at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, was the youngest recipient of the Society's Health Law Teachers' Award, which he received in 1990. He was passionate about teaching and had the idea to devote a session each year at the annual conference to teaching health law. It was always a plenary session at which he challenged us to be better teachers. Jay died in 1993, at the age of 46, not long after the Health Law Teachers conference that year, which he attended and which also happened to be held in Baltimore at the University of Maryland School of Law. Thereafter, the award was given in his name.

There were a number of nominees that year, but Charity Scott rose to the top of the list. While many know Charity as a skillful program builder, she is also a masterful teacher and well-deserved this award. In this tribute, I share the remarks I made in 2006 when I announced the winner of the Jay Healey Health Law Teachers Award.

In thinking about who was most deserving of the Jay Healey Health Law Teachers' Award this year, we wanted to honor someone whose work and

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career has emulated much of what Jay Healey sought to do in his lifetime. It didn't take us long to agree on who this should be. This is someone who for over a decade, since Jay's death, has taken over for him at this conference and has moderated the Jay Healey Teaching Session. Each year she brings to life the memory of Jay Healey and shares with all of us the role he played in inspiring students and other health law teachers. She spends many hours conceptualizing the panels for these conferences, coming up with excellent speakers and challenging the audience, making us think hard about what it means to be an effective and inspirational health law teacher. Her passion and enthusiasm for health law teaching shines through each year. We couldn't think of anyone who deserves this award more than Professor Charity Scott.

Charity actually comes from a long line of professors. She is a third-generation law professor and a fourth-generation professor. In 1883, her great grandfather, Austin Scott, was appointed to the faculty of Rutgers College as professor of history, political economy and constitutional law. Her grandfather, Austin Scott, was the Dane Professor of Law at Harvard and a leading authority on the law of trusts. (Some of you may have heard of "Scott on Trusts"). Her father, Gordon Scott, was a law professor at Stanford. Her uncle, Austin Scott, was a law professor at the University of Colorado and her stepmother, Kandis Scott, is a law professor at Santa Clara University.

For those of you who may not know Charity that well, she is a professor of law at Georgia State University College of Law and has a joint appointment at the University's Robinson College of Business, in the Institute of Health Administration. She is also the director of the Center for Law, Health & Society at Georgia State Law and teaches courses on health law and policy and bioethics. In addition, she is a faculty fellow in health law with Emory University's Center for Ethics, where she joins an interdisciplinary faculty team to offer clinical ethics classes for third-year medical students.

Charity, like Jay Healey, has worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between physicians and lawyers, providing opportunities for lawyers and health care professionals to work and learn together about issues at the intersection of law, health, ethics, and public policy.

She clearly has a passion for teaching. That passion, I found out, just might be genetic. According to her husband, Charity actually comes from a long line of professors. She is a third-generation law professor and a fourth-generation professor. In 1883, her great grandfather, Austin Scott, was appointed to the faculty of Rutgers College as professor of history, political economy and constitutional law. Her grandfather, Austin Scott, was the Dane Professor of Law at Harvard and a leading authority on the law of trusts. (Some of you may have heard of "Scott on Trusts"). Her father, Gordon Scott, was a law professor at Stanford. Her uncle, Austin Scott, was a law professor at the University of Colorado and her stepmother, Kandis Scott, is a law professor at Santa Clara University. Her son may also continue the family tradition, although the jury is still out on that. He is currently a law student at Yale and engaged to a law student. His dad, at least, thinks he may some day go into teaching. His dad, and Charity's husband, is also a professor (of math). It appears that Charity may have also shared her love of teaching with her daughter who has just finished a Fulbright Fellowship in Senegal and is now going to work for Teach America!

Charity practiced for several years before going into academia, first at the law firm of Venable Baetjer & Howard here in Baltimore and then at a small firm in Atlanta. While in Baltimore the Dean of the School of Law here, Mike Kelly, met Charity and asked her if she had any interest in teaching, but, at that point, she thought of herself as a lawyer rather than a professor. It was not until she moved to Atlanta that she thought about teaching. A colleague at the Emory Business School asked her if she would be interested in teaching a course at the Business School on law and business. This whetted her appetite for teaching. She took to it like a fish to water and bided her time until a position opened up at Georgia State Law.

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According to Steve Kaminshine, Dean at Georgia State, "Charity is terrific. I wish I had ten faculty like her. She is passionate in her belief that health law is a vehicle that brings together a host of disciplines and allows for interdisciplinary collaboration. She is innovative, creative, enterprising, indefatigable and constantly thinking outside the box.

The Center for Law, Health & Society at Georgia State Law is evidence of her vision that health law isn't a silo but a topic that calls for interdisciplinary thought and participation." The Center, which Charity directs, seeks to establish educational programs for lawyers and health professionals and supports collaboration among the disciplines in research and service.

Charity, like Jay Healey, is also a gifted teacher. I spoke with Jerri Nims, a former student and research assistant who now works for Charity at the Center. Jerri took every health law course that Charity offered. Once she took the first one, she couldn't get enough of her. She said "I remember walking into Professor Scott's health law liability class for the first time. It was 6:00 p.m. on a Monday night, and after a long first day as a new 2L, I was wondering how I would make it through the nearly three-hour class ahead of me. Then Professor Scott began to teach. Within minutes I was thinking, "This is why I came to law school. This is how it's supposed to be. There is hope! Her class was everything students hope for and nothing that we dread. It wasn't intimidating, but it was challenging. It wasn't tedious, it was inspiring. It wasn't a monologue … it was a dialogue!" Jerri told me, "Charity is regarded by the students at Georgia State Law not only as an excellent health law teacher, but as one of the best teachers at the law school. Recently, she won the Professor of the Year award which is an annual award given by the students and which is very competitive." Jerri went on to say that Charity is one of the professors who students seek out even if they are not concentrating in health law simply because of her reputation as an excellent teacher. "She is one of those rare teachers who can make the most ordinary topic interesting and the most controversial issue easy to talk about. She makes a concerted effort for her students to feel comfortable voicing their views on controversial topics (everything from abortion to end-of-life care)." In addition, "She is an exceptionally engaging and inspiring teacher who is tirelessly involved in a range of student endeavors. She has an open-door policy and always takes the time to speak with students who come to her for guidance, demonstrating her true investment and interest in her students."

Charity took a year and spent it at a local hospital. But she didn't just go and sit in an office, she spent her time doing rounds and actually following the doctors, mostly ob-gyns on their 36 – 48 hour shifts. She had a little cot and spent the nights with them and truly immersed herself in the field.

I also spoke to Sylvia Caley who met Charity when she was a 2L student in 1987. Sylvia came to law school after having worked as a nurse. At that time Charity was new to the law school, but was teaching courses that interested Sylvia. Sylvia said she recognized right from the start that Charity was a fabulous educator. Charity was looking for a graduate research assistant and Sylvia applied and got the position. Upon graduation Charity became a mentor to Sylvia who grew into a friend and collaborator. For over a decade they worked together in developing HeLP — The Health Law Partnership. HeLP, a medical-legal partnership between Georgia State Law, the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (which is the pediatric hospital system in Atlanta), got off the ground in July 2004. Its goal is to combine the health care expertise of hospital professionals with the legal expertise of lawyers to improve the health and well being of children. The Program delivers legal services to poor families whose children are patients at Children's Health Care of Atlanta using staff attorneys from legal aid and law student externs. As a result of Charity's vision and advocacy, soon the Law School will have an in-house legal clinic that provides legal assistance to clients of HeLP.

According to Sylvia, Charity is "tireless, and committed. When she believes she has a good idea, she is going to work on it until it comes to fruition. She doesn't let minor obstacles deter her."

In terms of Charity's commitment to health law, I was most struck by something her son, Peter, shared with me. I think it illustrates Charity's passion and determination to be a better teacher of health law and bioethics by truly understanding how the health care system works and how health care professionals operate within that system.

Peter told me that several years ago, perhaps during a sabbatical, Charity took a year and spent it at

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a local hospital. But she didn't just go and sit in an office, she spent her time doing rounds and actually following the doctors, mostly ob-gyns on their 36 – 48 hour shifts. She had a little cot and spent the nights with them and truly immersed herself in the field.

I could say a lot more about Charity, her research, her work with the ABA's Health Law Section and the Health Law Section of the Georgia Bar, with the Federal Judicial Center, the CDC, and the Health Care Ethics Consortium of Georgia, but it was this kind of dedication — spending 48 hours with the ob-gyns at the hospital — that made Professor Charity Scott an easy choice as the recipient of this year's Health Law Teachers Award.

Note

The author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

References

1. The Jay Healey Award, ASLME, *available at* <https://aslme.org/calendar/jay-healey-award/> (last visited April 23, 2024).

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