
MICHELE OKOH

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ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Duke University School of Law, Durham, NC

Senior Lecturing Fellow of Law, Fall 2019-Present

- Duke Environmental Law & Policy Clinic
 - Supervised student attorneys in representing clients in administrative and judicial proceedings.
 - Reviewed written work of student attorneys and student consultants (science and policy students from Nicholas School of the Environment).
 - Led in class case rounds and advised students on client representation.
- Co-Instructor
 - LAW443: Environmental Law and Policy Clinic (Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2020, Spring 2021)
 - Taught seminars on environmental justice and administrative law.
- Instructor
 - LAW611.24: Readings: Environmental Justice (Fall 2020)
- Guest Lecturer
 - LAW520: Climate Change and the Law (March 31, 2021)
 - LAW617: Environmental Law Readings Workshop (April 7, 2022)
- Service to Law School
 - Twiggs-Beskind Mock Trial Tournament Judge (February 25, 2022)
 - Co-chair, Clinic Communications Working Group
 - Planning & Steering Committees, 2021 Environmental Justice Symposium
 - Anti-Racism Working Group
 - Faculty Advisor
 - Pro Bono Project Supervisor
 - Public Interest/Public Service (PIPS) Mentor
 - Led orientation of LLM students to environmental law

RESEARCH & TEACHING INTERESTS

Primary: Criminal Law, Evidence, Environmental Law, Administrative Law, Environmental Justice, Health Law, Property, Torts, Race and the Law, Trial Advocacy

Secondary: Disability Law, Education Law, Criminal Procedure, State and Local Governmental Law, Constitutional Law

EDUCATION

George Washington University, Washington, DC

M.P.H, May 2022

Honors: Merit Scholarship

Duke University School of Law, Durham, NC

J.D., May 2009

Honors: William McGuire Scholarship
DUKE FORUM FOR LAW AND SOCIAL CHANGE, Lead Journal Editor
PILF Grant for Public Interest Work
Equal Justice Works Grant, Summer Corps
NC Bar Association Certificate of Achievement, Over 50 Hours Pro Bono

Activities: Duke Environmental Law and Policy Clinic, Student Attorney
Environmental Law Society
International Law Society, Steering Committee
Innocence Project, Investigated claims of actual innocence
Duke Law Drama Society, Publicity Manager & Actress
Black Law Student Association, Hillside High School Mentor
Political Organization, Voter Registration Coordinator

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, LA

B.A. *cum laude*, Political Science; Minor in Spanish May 2006

Honors: Horatio Alger Scholarship
Police Jury Association Scholarship
Tom and Lena Ritchie Endowed Memorial Scholarship
UL Lafayette Speech and Debate Team Scholarship
UL Lafayette Speech and Debate Member of the Year

Activities: Political Organization, President & Vice President
Delta Sigma Theta, Political Action Chair

AWARDS

Rebecca A. Head Award, American Public Health Association (APHA), 2021

- Awarded to an outstanding emerging leader in environmental health working at the intersection of environmental justice, science, and policy.
- APHA is professional association of over 25,000 members, from every discipline of public health, working to improve health and achieve health equity.

PUBLICATIONS

Scholarly Articles

Forgotten Waters, 111 GEO. L.J. (forthcoming 2023) (arguing for increasing access to public water systems under the Safe Drinking Water Act and consideration of intersectionality within peri-urban communities).

A Drop in the Bucket: North Carolina's Neglected Water Problem--Private Well Water Contamination, N.C. CIVIL RTS. L. REV (forthcoming 2022) (with Claire Mullaney) (proposing policies to increase access to safe drinking water in North Carolina).

Adapting to a 4°C World, 52 ELR 10211 (March 2022) (with Karrigan Börk, Karen Bradshaw, Cinnamon P. Carlarne, Robin Kundis Craig, Sarah Fox, Josh Galperin, Keith Hirokawa, Shi-Ling Hsu, Katrina Kuh, Kevin Lynch, Jessica Owley, Melissa Powers, Shannon Roesler, J.B. Ruhl, James Salzman, David Takacs, and Clifford J. Villa).

The Need for Social Support from Law Schools during the Era of Social Distancing, 16 FIU L. Rev. 117 (2021) (with Inès Ndonko Nnoko).

Books and Book Chapters

Environmental Impacts on Maternal Health, in PRACTICAL PLAYBOOK III: WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH (N.D. Hernandez, ed.) (forthcoming 2022).

America Erased, in FACING THE WORST CLIMATE CASE: THE ROLE OF LAW (forthcoming 2022).

Other Publications

America Erased, GREENLAWBLOG, October 8 2021, <https://greenlaw.blogs.pace.edu/2021/10/08/america-erased/>.

Shining Light on COVID-19 Medical Waste, 46 ADMIN. & REGULATORY L. NEWS 1 (2020).

Government Should Protect Private Information to Defend Public Health, THE HILL, May 21, 2020, <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/498900-government-should-protect-private-information-to-defend-public>.

CONFERENCES & PRESENTATIONS

Invited speaker, “Addressing Environmental Justice and Health Disparities in Women and Children” panel, North Carolina Public Health Association Conference, Virtual, April 28, 2022.

Invited speaker, “Forgotten Waters,” Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources Law Lecture Series, University of Houston Law Center's Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources (EENR) Center, Virtual, April 14, 2022.

Guest lecturer, “Forgotten Waters,” LAW 857: Environmental Skills and Practice, Elisabeth Haub School of Law, Pace University, Virtual, April 2, 2022.

Moderator, “Policy, Law, & Community Impacts,” Coal Ash: How safe is it and how should we manage it?, Duke Environmental Health Symposium, Durham, NC, March 25, 2022.

Moderator, “The Practice of Environmental Law” panel, North Carolina Bar Association and Duke Environmental Law & Policy Clinic, Durham, NC, March 17, 2022.

Invited speaker, “The Politics of Water: Equity at Half Empty or Half Full?” panel, The World of Water, Duke Law Forever Learning Institute, Virtual, March 15, 2022, <https://youtu.be/tqv6EPjCirk>.

Invited speaker, “Leveraging Healthcare to Fight Climate Change,” Environmental Justice: at the Intersection of Climate Change and Public Health, 34th Annual Health Law Symposium, Saint Louis University School of Law’s Center for Health Law Studies, Virtual, March 3, 2022.

Presenter, “COVID-19, Waste, and Environmental Justice” panel, American Public Health Association (APHA) 2021 Annual Meeting, Denver, CO, October 25, 2021.

Invited discussant, “Facing the Worst Climate Case: The Role of Law,” Environmental Law Collaborative, Colorado Springs, CO, July 27, 2021-July 29, 2021.

Invited speaker, “Environmental Justice: Policy & Public Health” panel, AABEN and Go Green NC, Virtual, May 26, 2021.

Invited speaker, “Talking with Michele Okoh: Environmental Justice,” de Beaumont Foundation, Virtual, May 12, 2021, <https://debeaumont.org/news/2021/talking-with-michele-okoh-environmental-justice/>.

Invited speaker, “Addressing the C in ACEs: Combatting the Nation’s Silent Crisis” panel, APHA, Virtual, May 3, 2021, <https://www.apha.org/Events-and-Meetings/APHA-Calendar/Webinar-Events/2021/Addressing-the-C-in-ACEs>.

Presenter, “Teaching and Learning during the COVID Care Crisis” panel, Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies COVID Care Crisis Symposium, Virtual, January 14, 2021.

Presenter, “Exploring the Role of State and Local Government Laws in Environmental Sustainability” panel, AALS 2021 Annual Meeting, Virtual, January 6, 2021.

Invited Speaker, “Advancing Racial Equity Webinar Series: Mobilizing Public Health to Achieve Environmental Justice” panel, APHA, Virtual, November 17, 2020, <https://www.apha.org/events-and-meetings/apha-calendar/webinar-events/2020/racial-equity-part-6>.

Invited speaker, “Hot Topics in Environmental Law and Policy” panel, Duke Environmental Law and Policy Forum Symposium, Virtual, October 30, 2020.

Moderator, “Support for Local Environmental Health” panel, APHA Annual Meeting and Expo, Virtual, October 27, 2020.

Moderator, “Community Science and the Environmental Justice Act Deinstitutionalizing University Research” panel, Duke University School of Law, Durham, NC, March 2, 2020.

MEDIA ACTIVITY

Face Masks Are Hurting the Environment, NEWSY, January 11, 2022, <https://www.newsy.com/stories/face-masks-are-hurting-the-environment/>.

Race & Equity in Durham, DURHAM COMMITTEE ON THE AFFAIRS OF BLACK PEOPLE, Community Blog, September 24, 2021, <https://www.dcabpinc.org/blog>.

Environmental Justice with Michele Okoh, IMMINENT TECHNOLOGY, Episode 3, February 17, 2021, <https://podcast.imminentteachnology.com/1581748/7590634-environmental-justice-with-michele-okoh>.

Myth-Busting with Public Health Experts: The Safety of Single-Use, INDISPOSABLE PODCAST, Episode 30, August 20, 2020, <https://www.upstreamolutions.org/podcasts>.

Quoted in *It's Official: Reusables are Safe during COVID-19*, GRIST, June 26, 2020, <https://grist.org/climate/its-official-reusables-are-safe-during-covid-19/>.

PROFESSIONAL LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Okoh Law Firm, Wilson, NC

Managing Attorney, October 2016- August 2018

- Defended criminal defendants against criminal prosecution in state and federal court.
- Represented claimants at Social Security hearings.
- Interviewed prospective clients to evaluate strength of potential cases.
- Cross examined Vocational Experts using appropriate hypothetical questions.
- Drafted briefs regarding issues of disability law.

7th Judicial District, Rocky Mount, NC

Assistant District Attorney May 2012- September 2016

- Prosecuted criminal cases in Wilson, Nash, and Edgecombe District and Superior Courts.
- Lead prosecutor for all sex crimes committed in Edgecombe County.
- Drafted pleadings and other legal documents in preparation for trial.
- Advised various law enforcement agencies on criminal law and procedure.
- Communicated with crime victims and medical experts in preparation for trial.
- Represented office on Multidisciplinary Team and Child Fatality Prevention Team.

North Carolina Department of Justice, Raleigh, NC

Associate Attorney General, August 2010- May 2012

- Represented Department of Health and Human Services in judicial proceedings, reconsideration hearings, mediations, and hearings before Office of Administrative Hearings.
- Advised Social Work Board on issues related to administrative law and disciplinary hearings.
- Wrote motions, memoranda, proposed decisions, and briefs regarding Medicaid law.
- Litigated cases involving disability determinations and medical and mental health services.
- Prepared approximately 8 to 20 cases per week for oral argument.
- Negotiated settlement agreements and consent orders.
- Reviewed medical records submitted with prior approval requests for medical services.

U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Washington, DC

Fellow, July 2011- August 2011

- Communicated with private and public stakeholders regarding Small Business Administration (SBA) programs and legislation addressing discrimination and inequality among women, minorities, and economically disadvantaged small businesses.
- Commented and participated in Congressional briefing on "The Future of Foster Care: A Revolution for Change," which proposed recommendations on improving foster care system.
- Assessed 8(a) programs of SBA to address implementation problems, including identification of economically and socially disadvantaged small businesses.
- Represented Committee in "The Gender Wage Gap: What is the Impact on Women and their Families," which addressed gender wage disparities and employment discrimination.
- Researched statutory, regulatory, and common law for Committee hearings on small business issues, such as Alaska Native Corporations and funding.
- Wrote memoranda on legislative issues, including committee jurisdiction, Women's Procurement Rule, Small Business Lending Fund, and program authorization limits.

North Carolina Department of Justice, Raleigh, NC

Fellow, January 2010- August 2010

- Advised Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on contractual rights and jurisdictional issues, including DENR's jurisdiction in relation to local health departments and federal agencies, third party beneficiary rights, and waivers of sovereign immunity by Army Corps of Engineers and Navy through contract.
- Assisted with and attended depositions, judicial proceedings, and administrative hearings on water quality and permit violations.
- Drafted proposed rule for Environmental Management Commission, answer in support of lien priority, and informal opinions on thermal pollution and water reclamation.
- Completed motions and briefs addressing issues such as estoppel against government agencies, contractor liability, and Section 404(f) exceptions under Clean Water Act.
- Petitioned court to pierce corporate veil, which led to successful resolution of matter.
- Investigated causes of action arising from Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), Clean Water Act, Oil Pollution Act, Oil

Pollution and Hazardous Substances Control Act (OPHSCA), and North Carolina Law for Offshore Oil and Gas Activities.

- Wrote memoranda on issues such as radiation regulation, well regulation, residency, joinder, statute of limitations, and laches.

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, Raleigh, NC

Law Clerk for the Hon. Allyson Duncan, September 2009- November 2009

- Researched and wrote bench memoranda advising on various legal issues, including employment discrimination, search & seizure, federal jurisdiction, and punitive damages.
- Assisted with cases such as *Snyder v. Phelps*, *U.S. v. Murphy*, and *Dolgaleva v. Virginia Beach City Public Schools*.
- Observed oral argument before Fourth Circuit.

Earthjustice, Oakland, CA

Environmental Law Clerk, Summer 2008

- Researched and wrote memoranda on Clean Air Act, California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, Plant Protection Act, and National Environmental Policy Act.
- Participated in conference calls and local city council meetings.

Climate Change Policy Partnership, Durham, NC

Environmental Research Assistant, June 2007- May 2008

- Prepared memoranda and presentations identifying potential legal barriers to implementing geologic carbon sequestration.
- Researched liability and regulation of carbon dioxide pipelines and injection wells, including regulation under the Safe Drinking Water Act and Pipeline Safety Act.

ADMISSIONS & ACCREDITATION

North Carolina State Bar

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina

Veterans Administration Accreditation

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP & SERVICE

Member, Clinic Crew

Member, Critical Collective

Guest Editor, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Section Councilor, Environment Section of APHA

Co-Chair, Environmental Justice Committee of Environment Section, APHA

Environment Section Representative, Action Board, APHA

Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources Section Council, North Carolina Bar Association

Environmental Racism Working Group, APHA

Environmental Health Section Program Committee, North Carolina Public Health Association

Journal Reviewer, CASE STUDIES IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Member, UCSF Science Response Network

Member, National Reuse Network

Member, North Carolina Environmental Justice Working Group
Member, North Carolina Permitting Decisions Working Group
Member, North Carolina Title VI Cumulative Impacts Regulatory Action Working Group
Member, North Carolina Well Water Working Group

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Women's Theatre Festival, Director, Southeast Regional Premiere of *Eclipsed*
Cary Playwrights Forum, Director, *Black Spectre: A Trail Grown Cold*
Military & Veterans Law Section Council, North Carolina Bar Association
Executive Board, Youth of Wilson
Teen Court Judge, Mediation Center of Eastern Carolina
Wilson Advisory Council, Mediation Center of Eastern Carolina
Sierra Club, Political Committee
Refugee Resettlement Volunteer, World Relief
Citizen Lawyer Committee, North Carolina Bar Association
Endowment Scholarship Award and Oversight Committee, Wake County Bar Association
Bench-Bar Committee, Wake County Bar Association
Lawyers Support Committee, Wake County Bar Association
Wake County Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council
Moore Square Museums Magnet Middle School Mentor, North Carolina Department of Justice