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# MICHELE OKOH

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## ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

### **Duke University School of Law, Durham, NC**

*Senior Lecturing Fellow of Law, August 2019-Present*

- Duke Environmental Law & Policy Clinic
  - Supervised law, policy, and science students in representing clients.
  - Taught seminars on environmental justice and administrative law.
- Taught Readings: Environmental Justice (Fall 2020)
- Service
  - Co-chair, Clinic Communications Working Group
  - Planning & Steering Committees, 2021 Environmental Justice Symposium
  - Faculty Advisor
  - Pro Bono Project Supervisor
  - Public Interest/Public Service (PIPS) Mentor
  - Lead orientation of LLM students to environmental law

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## EDUCATION

### **George Washington University, Washington, DC**

M.P.H. expected, December 2021

*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

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### RESEARCH & TEACHING INTERESTS

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Primary: Criminal Law, Evidence, Environmental Law, Environmental Health, Environmental Justice, Administrative Law, Waste Management, Climate Change, Toxins and Hazardous Waste, Health Law, Trial Advocacy

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

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### PUBLICATIONS

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*Slowing the Burn: Efforts to Reduce the Usage of Toxic Flame Retardants* (manuscript in progress) (for presentation at Public Health Law Conference, September 2021).

*North Carolina's Restriction on Environmental Action by State Agencies* (manuscript in progress) (for presentation at AALS 2021 Annual Meeting, January 2021).

*It's Time to Shine Some Sunlight on COVID-19 Medical Waste*, 45 Admin. & Regulatory L. News \_\_ (forthcoming 2020).

*The Need for Social Support from Law Schools during the Era of Social Distancing* (under review)(arguing for the application of Social Support Theory in addressing the needs of law students during the COVID-19 pandemic).

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### MEDIA ACTIVITY

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*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/>.

*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

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Presenter, “Advancing Racial Equity Webinar Series: Mobilizing Public Health to Achieve Environmental Justice” panel, American Public Health Association, Virtual, November 17, 2020.

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, American Public Health Association 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.

## PROFESSIONAL LEGAL EXPERIENCE

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**Okoh Law Firm**, Wilson, NC

*Managing Attorney*, October 2016- August 2018

- 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.
- Defended criminal defendants against criminal prosecution in state and federal court.

**7<sup>th</sup> Prosecutorial District**, Rocky Mount, NC

*Assistant District Attorney* May 2012- September 2016

- Tried criminal cases in District and Superior Court.
- 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*, January 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.

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### **ADMISSIONS & ACCREDITATION**

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North Carolina State Bar

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

Veterans Administration Accreditation

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### **PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP & SERVICE**

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Section Councilor, Environmental Section of American Public Health Association

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

Environmental Racism Working Group, American Public Health Association

Member, North Carolina Public Health Association

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### **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

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Women's Theatre Festival, Director, *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