

# Charity Scott and ASLME

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Charity Scott was a professor of health law at Georgia State University College of Law, the founding director of the College of Law's Center for Law, Health, and Society, and co-founder of the Health Law Partnership (HeLP) at Georgia State. She is an iconic figure in her adopted hometown of Atlanta and certainly one of the most important scholars in the history of the health law field, justly celebrated for her teaching, her innovation, her commitment to interdisciplinary work, and for her compassion and love for others. She was also a dear friend of mine. In this short essay I will reflect on my friendship with Charity and her involvement with the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics, the publisher of this journal.

As I said at the symposium honoring Charity's life and work in Atlanta,<sup>1</sup> I was relatively late to the "Charity game." I first met her in 2003, many years after she had become an important figure in the health law world. She approached me to gauge my interest as editor of the *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* in publishing a quarterly column exploring ideas, best practices, and potential collaborations surrounding the teaching of health law. I was quickly won over by her passion for teaching, her openness to new ideas, and her excitement about editing and publishing. I learned that Charity had done some editing herself at the beginning of her career, and like virtually everything else she did, she was good at it. Charity was soon the editor of a *JLME* column called "Teaching Health Law," that ran in our pages for many years.<sup>2</sup> In recent years that "Teaching Health Law" column has been restarted, and is now under the very able stewardship of Professor Brietta Clark of Loyola Marymount University.<sup>3</sup>

It was because of the teaching column that I became friends with Charity. She would call me four or five times a year, roughly around the time she would submit a new article, and we would often talk for a long spell. I think she called so often because she knew I enjoyed speaking with her so much. We would speak about family, friends, industry gossip, and ideas, but I was always struck by her interest in the nuts-and-bolts aspects of publishing, and how journals can

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be used as a tool to share ideas. It was also evident from our calls that Charity was a voracious reader, as it seemed to me that she read every issue of *JLME* cover-to-cover. And I don't flatter myself or my journal to suggest she did that only with *JLME*. Charity read widely, deeply, and well. We rightfully celebrate Charity's innovations in the classroom, but make no mistake: she really, really, knew her stuff. I suspect Charity would have been an outstanding teacher even if she was a straight-ahead lecturer in front of the classroom, but she was so much more.

Charity's Teaching column was, of course, hardly her only intersecting point with ASLME. Charity was an early and regular attendee of ASLME's 'Health Law

education. Aside from her writings, she guest-edited a special issue of *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* on "Transforming the Future of Public Health Law Education through a Faculty Fellowship Program,"<sup>7</sup> which was enormously popular. Many of the authors in this issue fondly remember their experiences with that project.

In addition, and typical of Charity's habit of leading by example, she soon volunteered her time to help lead the organization she cared so deeply about. She served six years as a member of our board of directors, and in 2015 she served as President of ASLME.<sup>8</sup> Charity's presidential term was highlighted by the loving regard and concern she held for the employees

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Teachers' Conference (now called the Health Law Professors Conference), demonstrating her commitment both to teaching and to multidisciplinary education, by so clearly supporting an academic society that openly celebrated multidisciplinary partnerships and practice. Upon the tragic death of the beloved professor Jay Healey of the University of Connecticut in 1993, Charity took up the responsibility of running the teaching session of the conference, which under her stewardship grew to be an opening-day session attended and enjoyed by hundreds of scholars.<sup>4</sup> Charity's leading role in guiding teachers, through her column in *JLME*, her work at the conference, and especially her inspiring example in the classrooms of Georgia State University was recognized in 2006 when she was awarded what I believe is the greatest honor bestowed on a scholar of health law, the Jay Healey Award. The Healey Award is given, according to ASLME, to "professors who have devoted a significant portion of their career to health law teaching and whose selection would honor Jay'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."<sup>5</sup> Charity certainly fit that description, and happily the speech announcing Charity's win was given by her friend Diane Hoffmann. That speech is reproduced in this issue.<sup>6</sup>

Even these significant accomplishments, however, barely scratch the surface of Charity's involvement in ASLME and her commitment to multidisciplinary

of ASLME and, in return, I hope she felt the loving regard all of us felt for her. Following her presidential term, Charity remained a member in good standing at ASLME for the rest of her life. Her support of ASLME reflected many of her most important concerns: fostering the growth of health law, encouraging better teaching in her field and in all fields of law, and using our journals and conferences to reach out to new, often young people, and show them all the potential that this field of study had to offer.

I will close with one final, and deeply personal, observation. From almost the first day I met Charity, more than twenty years ago, she reminded me of another dear friend and mentor of mine, and coincidentally someone who also had some pretty strong connections to Atlanta: Julian Bond, the famous civil rights leader. I served as Julian's teaching assistant at the University of Virginia, and just like with Charity, I used to enjoy spending time with him so much that I would occasionally manufacture reasons just to talk with him. And like Julian, Charity was always extraordinarily busy, and yet she always, *always* made time for her friends and those she cared about. Julian once held up a phone call with the President of the United States to finish a conversation with me. I don't *think* Charity ever did that, but she never made me feel any less important than anyone else in her large, lived-in life. And more than anything I think that's why we remember people like Julian and Charity; because of the way they always made us feel about ourselves. Charity was, by any measure, a great

person. She was a great scholar, a great writer, a great teacher, a great parent, and a great friend. When she spoke, she had the power to make people believe that she could do anything. But instead, when she spoke, she made people believe that *they* could do anything. That's why I remember and celebrate her, and that is why so many of us are here together in this issue of the *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* to celebrate the wonderful and generous Charity Scott.

#### Note

The author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

#### References

1. The symposium honoring Charity was held at Georgia State University College of Law in Atlanta on February 15-16, 2024. The papers collected in this issue of the *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* were delivered at that symposium. See <<https://gsu.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Embed.aspx?id=3195b883-3056-41c5-a0a0-b11800e66717>> (last visited May 22, 2024.)
2. A sampling of Charity's writings for *JLME*, including the columns she authored and edited, and other writings she produced for the journal, can be found at <<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-medicine-and-ethics/listing?q=charity+scott&searchWithinIds=2104B73E1F48DE2DBDAC9CE8222B1F3D%2C5E63478F670287E9FA14COB9A12E6DDF%2C200CB1EE14AB7733C45EE6FA2DF2FD9A%2CB37F60182D109F4312932413F3C21099&fts=yes>> (last visited May 22, 2024.)
3. B. Clark, "Teaching Health Law," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 51, no. 3 (2023): 698-702, available at <<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-medicine-and-ethics/article/teaching-health-law/3A204652F34CCE4EC718326F08E8FC87>> (last visited May 22, 2024).
4. Charity's role in the teaching session is ably explored by Sidney Watson in this issue; see S. Watson, "A Tribute to Professor Charity Scott: Imagination, Reflection, and the Jay Healey Teaching Plenary," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 52, no. 2 (2024): 226-229.
5. More on the Healey award is available at <<https://aslme.org/calendar/jay-healey-award/>> (last visited May 22, 2024.)
6. D. E. Hoffmann, "Charity Scott - A Masterful Teacher," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 52, no. 2 (2024): 222-225.
7. Available at <<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-medicine-and-ethics/issue/transforming-the-future-of-public-health-law-education-through-a-faculty-fellowship-program/FD16C51FC2819818342CAE3F1255056D>> (last visited May 22, 2024.)
8. A list of ASLME's presidents can be found here <<https://aslme.org/about-us/>> (last visited May 22, 2024).