

I had two options: take the July bar or take the February bar. And thus, week ago today, I sat for the July 2020 administration of the Mississippi bar exam...and literally risked it all. I considered my family and what would happen if I contracted the virus and carried it home to them. I knew I would never forgive myself. Tinkering on the fence, after having studied for nearly two months, my mom encouraged me to take it. She said that I had worked too hard and sacrificed too much not to. What I heard was the need in her voice. The need for me to be able to provide for myself.

See my mom earns about \$15,000.00 per year working in the cafeteria of the local community college so any added bill is the difference between both of us being homeless or financially insolvent. I knew I had no choice.

But a little bit about what studying was like...My mom and I have been homeschooling my 3-year-old twin nephews since their school closed down in March. We did so because my brother and sister-in-law work and save lives as medical professionals. A week before the exam, my mom and I drove over 12 and half hours to get to Mississippi. We avoided as much as possible stopping to do anything including using the restroom.

Once we made it to Mississippi, I drove an hour and a half to the host hotel and remained there to continue my studies and find some semblance of normalcy in a time that is anything but normal. And I studied, and I worried. I studied as hard as I could praying that my classmates who were also driving down would not come into contact with the virus. I worried that more people would forego their chance to become legal change agents and talked several of them out of deferring...they, too, just could not afford to do so.

Now...many people have said well you could find another job. Some of my colleagues have applied for teaching licenses others have decided that maybe this is not the profession for them. But, I did not go to law school to become a teacher, even though I thank God for them. I did not go to law school to work as a receptionist with a beautiful smile, and I did not go to law school to obtain the knowledge and know-how (or will to learn how) of an attorney to earn the salary of a paralegal. I went to law school to practice law. And so, like many of my classmates, I put on my mask and risked it all to become an *Esquire*.

I cried due to the stress of becoming a carrier of the virus. I cried due to the stress that my mother would face having to try to provide for her 27-year-old daughter she'd worked two, sometimes three jobs to put through school. Not because I was scared of the exam. Not because I was afraid to fail...and most definitely not because I wanted a diploma privilege. I cried every night because I was afraid to put my family at risk to achieve my own personal and selfish goal of being a legal servant. And quietly, silently, I cried and I died to myself.

No exam is worth the lives of my family or your family. No exam is worth your mental health and sanity. No exam, especially one which can be administered online or through alternative modes is worth your life...because that's what we're talking about. We are talking about young professionals who have decided to go against all reason to possibly have the chance to enter the practice of law.

In a world of uncertainty, one thing is for sure, there is more than one way to prove competency. And taking an in-person exam is not what we should have to do.

I strongly urge you to support this amendment.