

Spotlight ON Service Kevin Patrick



Kevin Patrick

Kevin Patrick ended up in Des Moines by chance. It wasn't his hometown, and he didn't have any previous connections to Iowa. Born in Michigan, raised in California and educated in New Jersey, Patrick

planted roots in Iowa as a political field organizer during the 2008 Barack Obama presidential election.

He stayed to attend law school at Drake, then stayed to begin practicing law. He chose to stay to grow his career and family in a community he has grown to care deeply about. His commitment to that community rivals that of any native.

"Nowadays, we are siloed. We live in homes right next to each other, but are isolated from one another, and we have lost the ability to see others' perspectives," he said. "But, in a community the size of Des Moines, we all share common purpose that is only exposed when we step outside our comfort zones. And one way to bridge that gap and thread us together is by volunteering."

Patrick joined Nyemaster Goode, P.C.'s litigation department in 2019 after six years as an Assistant Polk County Attorney. Part of his work in the Juvenile Division allowed him to serve on a committee that addressed the disproportionate minority contact in the Polk County juvenile detention center.

"It is important to have experiences that remind you of how blessed you are in your life, and see that people caught up in the system are not always bad people," he said. "They have stories just like yours and, but for grace, you could be in their shoes."

At Nyemaster, Patrick now serves on the firm's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, as well as the Recruiting Committee. He is also an active volunteer in several community-based initiatives, including a recent appointment to the City of Des Moines' newly-created Community Policing and Code Enforcement Policy and Practice Review Committee.

As the son of a police officer and as a former prosecutor, Patrick recognizes the indispensable contributions police officers make to the community. Equally important for Patrick is the need to "strengthen the relationship between the community and police officers, look at policies and practices in the police department and what has had a

disparate impact on people of color, help the community get to know their rights when dealing with police and at the same time making sure our police officers are being held accountable."

Patrick is also a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Founded in 1906, it is the first intercollegiate

Greek-letter fraternity historically established for African American men in the country. Through that organization, he has worked with young people of color through programs such as Project Alpha, which teaches sexual responsibility and consent to young males. The fraternity has also organized presentations for high schoolers about the benefits of college and how to afford it, raised money for educational scholarships and hosted voter registration drives at the annual Back 2 School Bashes at the Grubb YMCA.

"Volunteering is a chance to get out of your own way and see what people are really going through. Boards that do it right put you in the environment you're trying to serve," he said.

He also serves on the Iowa Access to Justice Commission and on the Drake Law Board of Counselors, which serves as the eyes and ears of the dean of Drake Law to make sure the school is paying attention to issues that impact students and alumni.

Of all of these experiences, Patrick says it was an early volunteer project that had the biggest impact on him. He was invited to serve on the Des Moines Public Arts Foundation ad hoc committee raising funds for the "Monumental Journey" art sculpture to be erected honoring the National Bar Association (NBA) and its African American founders who created the organization in 1925 in Des Moines after being denied entry into the American Bar Association.

"Not being from Iowa, I had no idea the NBA was founded here," he said. "I couldn't believe that my professional legacy was founded here. To see how influential the state of Iowa has been, even in my own professional life, was very impactful to me. I wanted to be part of the story of making this sculpture happen." He is now an active member in the NBA's local chapter.

He says that "telling stories," like the story of the NBA's founding, is a big part of how he decides what causes to devote his time and energy to. "I try to think about what causes I am passionate about and whether I can be an effective voice to tell the story of that organization," he said. "If so, then I know it's the right opportunity for me."



Patrick (pictured left) served as a moderator for the Des Moines Authors Visiting in Des Moines (AVID) series. The author (pictured right) is Chigozie Obioma, who wrote "An Orchestra of Minorities."

The ISBA Public Relations Committee honors an Iowa attorney or group of attorneys each month in this special "Spotlight on Service" feature in *The Iowa Lawyer*. If you would like to nominate someone to be recognized for his or her work in the community, please contact: **Melissa Higgins, mhiggins@iowabar.org.**