

Member Spotlight

Lauren Robinson

Senior Associate General Counsel

American Bar Association

Chicago, IL

Current position since: 2007

Years in-house: 8

Law School: New York University

Undergrad: Vassar College, A.B. English Major

Post-Grad: NYU Graduate School of PublicService, M.A.

Worst job I ever had:

During college, I interned for a city agency (not here in Chicago.) My boss was the epitome of the unmotivated government “hack” and ignored me; I literally had nothing to do all day. I asked HR for help, but it didn’t change things. Maybe some college students would have welcomed getting paid for a do-nothing summer job, but I had really hoped to get some valuable experience in that agency, so it was very disappointing.

Best thing about my current job:

Helping fulfill the ABA’s mission of pursuing liberty and defending justice. Isn’t that why we became lawyers?

Hardest lesson I’ve learned as a lawyer:

You can’t be an expert at everything. The range of legal and business issues that come at you as an in-house attorney are just too varied. Sometimes that reality feels a little uncomfortable. But if you at least know what you don’t know, you can seek out the right people or resources to deal with it.

What I look forward to in my career:

Wherever my career may lead, there are two “must haves”: 1) being able to leverage my legal and business skills to bring value to the organization; and 2) working with professionally passionate people who are committed to quality work and the organization’s mission.

Favorite volunteer activity:

I am a member of the Leadership Advisory Committee of The Art Institute of Chicago. We provide an African-American perspective to the Art Institute and promote and sustain diversity within the institution.

Advice I would give to lawyers new to in-house:

Two ears... one mouth. Use them accordingly. (Translation: Ask questions, listen, and don’t act like a know-it-all.)

Most valuable life lesson that I still apply today:

Treat every person – princes, paupers or presidents – with dignity and respect. Remember their names and learn something about them. Work relationships are so much better if you show your colleagues that you care about them personally.

Best things about ACC Chicago:

- 1) Lunchtime CLEs
- 2) The annual “prom” (celebration dinner); Malcolm Gladwell and Juan Williams were awesome speakers!
- 3) The “Clinic-in-a-Box” *pro bono* day serving area non-profits; such an efficient way to give back

When I’m not working, I like to...

read fiction, view and collect art, and play tennis. For the past three years, I’ve taken an annual tennis trip with my team to Negril, Jamaica, where we enjoy great facilities (both hard and clay courts) and get great instruction from the pros. Oh... and there’s a great beach, too.

My favorite vacation spot:

Negril, of course. I also met the love of my life there.

Place I’ve never been but would most like to visit:

Brazil.

All-time favorite movie:

Like Water for Chocolate (1992) based on a book by Mexican novelist Laura Esquivel.
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon is a close second.

What book are you currently reading?

The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears, by Dinaw Mengestu.

If I were not practicing law, I would probably be...

writing poetry. Yep.