

ASHLEY This is Ashley Merritt, stealing the podcast mic from Cordell fork today to talk to a few of my favorite students. All students are my favorite. I shouldn't say that. Everyone is my favorite, but

MERRITT: these are some especially lovely young women that I get the pleasure speak with today. I will let them introduce themselves, but I'm really excited for this. We'll see how this goes today. All right, you guys, who wants to go first? Jazz?

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: All right. Hi my name's Jasmine Lee. I'm from right outside of Richmond, Virginia in the middle of the end I am a Double Woo, which means that I also got here for undergrad. Graduated in 2016 and took one year off. I'm now a 2L in the law school graduating in 2020. Before law school, I was up in DC Doing digital and social media for the Kennedy Center and working at NPR and PBS in Richmond.

COURTNEY Hi I'm Courtney Davis. I'm a 2L well. I'm from Dallas, Texas. I went to Baylor for undergrad in

DAVIS: Waco, Texas. Sic 'em.

ASHLEY Also the home of Chip and Joanna Gaines.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Yes

DAVIS:

[LAUGHTER]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: Did you get discounts on their stuff?

COURTNEY I never went to any of their stuff because it was like all opening when I was there.

DAVIS:

SPEAKER: Oh, that's right.

COURTNEY And I don't do long lines, but my twin sister went and she said it's cool. And now Waco's like

DAVIS: this touristy place. Yeah when I went, I was like what a small little town, coming from Dallas. Anyway--

[LAUGHTER]

I went to Baylor, love Waco now, and let's see I graduated in 2016 from Baylor. I took a year off before I started law school in that year. I interned in the governor's office for the state of Texas and then I was at a non-profit in Dallas.

ASHLEY What non-profit? What did you do?

MERRITT:

COURTNEY It's a very local one called Operation Karen and it helps homeless people in Dallas. And I was
DAVIS: an office assistant so, I just helped with the logistical stuff and then I came to law school.

LISE GUERRIER: Hi my name's Lise. I am a 2L at the law school. I am from Boston, Massachusetts. I went to Tufts University in Somerville, Massachusetts for my undergrad and I finished in 2015. After I graduated, I worked as a paralegal at a law firm in Boston and then I came to UVA. I feel like I'm cutting some stuff out, no? Did I get it?

ASHLEY I'm surprised you didn't bring up Boston sports.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: Well I just didn't want to start a commentary--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

LISE GUERRIER: Everyone want to hear about our sports. That's what it is, but I just wanted a good first impression on this podcast. So, go Patriots.

[LAUGHTER]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: I don't think the mic picked it up.

ASHLEY It's for the best, it's for the best.

MERRITT:

[sigh]

SPEAKER: Next question!

ASHLEY Anyways, anyways! So, you guys, I feel like you stopped right before I feel like Cordell maybe
MERRITT: ends with this question, but we're going to start with it and then we're going to see where things get spicy from there.

SPEAKER: Oh, spicy. Wow.

ASHLEY All right. I'm get a lot of heat towards me. You can feel this.

MERRITT:

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY It's a mild spice. Talk about what like what-- cause y'all are from different places. Like we've
MERRITT: got a Virginian, you're from Texas, you're from Boston and you all went to undergrads in your home states.

SPEAKER: We did.

ASHLEY In your neck of the woods. So, well you--

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: I haven't left, so it's a little different.

ASHLEY I didn't either.

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY I left for little bit. I was in Texas for a bit.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: That was for a year.

ASHLEY DC doesn't count.

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY We've been talked about this.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: You haven't really left either.

ASHLEY Houston. I was in Houston for a while. A couple, two years.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Oh. OK. OK.

ASHLEY I feel like you guys don't know me. You guys don't know me.

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY I did TFA in Houston.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Didn't your parents also move to Texas?

ASHLEY No, no that was just me. My parents are from New York and move to Virginia. So all but

MERRITT: Jasmine and me, I guess as well, left their own states to come to law school here. So you guys can we talk a bit about why UVA? Why did you choose it of the many, many options that I'm sure you all had. Why you chose to come here. Whoever wants to--

LISE GUERRIER: Since we're all looking at me.

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: One of you should start. I haven't left.

SPEAKER: Just saying.

LISE GUERRIER: I mean so I went to undergrad about 20 minutes from where my family lived at. And I had many regrets about being so close to home just because I felt as though I really couldn't develop my identity as an adult because so much of who I was confined into how people have known me for so long.

ASHLEY That's interesting.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: And so I-- When thinking about what I wanted to do, I wasn't sure if I wanted to go to law school, which is why I worked as a paralegal. And very soon after I started working as a

paralegal, I just realized that I really liked the work that the attorneys were doing and I felt as though I would be good at it as well and I really liked the change that they were doing. And so, I knew by the end of the second year I wanted to go to law school. And when I applied, I wanted to find a place that had a lot of what I had in undergrad, in terms of like a small inclusive community, a place where I could make good friends, a place that wasn't too big, a place where I wasn't spending hundreds of thousands of dollars just to live. It kind of narrowed my pool and so I--

ASHLEY Oh, so did you start with a narrowed list of schools to apply to or was this after you'd already
MERRITT: applied, and then the decision making process? You follow me?

LISE GUERRIER: Yeah. I mean, I think in general you're just always going to cast a wide net.

Yeah yeah yeah I'm just so yeah

LISE GUERRIER: So I cast like I applied to a variety of schools but then I made a list of where I would prefer to go and the more I started looking into UVA, the better it seemed for me in terms of what I wanted and what I was looking for. So when I came to visit, it just felt right. It felt like I could succeed in all the ways I wanted to, build the relationships that I wanted to, excel academically the way I wanted to without having to be in the middle of a huge city. So yeah. So, no regrets Yeah 2/3 of the way so you don't have him at this point. So, good decision.

ASHLEY Oh my gosh. I still can't believe that.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Court.

ASHLEY Court.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Court.

COURTNEY OK is the question why we came to law school or why we came to UVA?

DAVIS:

ASHLEY Oh it can be both I like that. I like it. Interpret how you will.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: I'm sorry. It's like I didn't answer the question.

SPEAKER: No, you did. You answered an additional question. I wanted to know--

LISE GUERRIER: Oh, an additional question.

SPEAKER: Because you went into why you decided to go to law school and--

ASHLEY I want to know it all. The podcast listeners want to know everything about you.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Just fast forward over the next two minutes.

SPEAKER: Is the name for people who listen to this like, friends of the pod? No, I do love, John Favreau. I love you if you ever listen to this, but no we don't.

LISE GUERRIER: Can we call this the Brown Table Talk?

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY We'll get there. We're not there yet.

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY They can't see it. They can't see it, so they don't know what we look like and what the table

MERRITT: looks like. So they didn't catch the double entendre.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY Ooh, speaking of, isn't the Jordan--

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: Court, Court, Court.

LISE GUERRIER: Why are you in law school and why specifically UVA since I added an extra question. Thank you

ASHLEY For taking the microphone.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Thank you Lise, for hosting this podcast. Well first of all, I would like to disclose I'm congested.

DAVIS: So if I sound not excited--

JASMINE LEE: You sound great. You sound great. Stop it. Stop it.

COURTNEY Anyway.

DAVIS:

ASHLEY A little sick a little bit subdued a little fast for it

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Anyway anyway so I did go to school in Texas, like Lise, close to home not 20 minutes or
DAVIS: home but an hour and a half. So I didn't actually go home like every weekend or anything but could go for all the holidays which I liked it was easy like if I needed anything I was close but when I-- Is it picking it up?

ASHLEY Yeah I was worried. I thought it stopped you're good.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY So when I decided to go to law school which I'll get into that decision in a second since we're
DAVIS: answering two questions, I knew that I thought that maybe I would want to go to school outside of Texas. I do love Texas and I loved being near my family but I just figured for my personal development. It would be good to see other things and go somewhere else. So that's why I was looking at schools in Texas and outside of Texas.

I decided to go to law school because I started out-- I graduated with a degree in psychology minor in statistics. When I was in college, I thought I wanted to go to grad school for clinical psychology clinical psychologist but like around the summer after my junior year I was just-- which was like when I would start applying to programs, it's like I'm not that excited about this, not enough to be working on this for like five to seven years.

And the things I was involved in undergrad like I was on the student court, which was like the judicial branch of student government. So I was a justice 2013 2014 Justice of the year. Yes do you like that and so I was on that and I kind of like to b see but Lise is a hater. Yeah anyway I was just going forget the wear a robe or a wig one time we wore robes. The guys on the court were really into getting us to wear robes.

ASHLEY Were they just like graduation robes basically? Or graduation gowns.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Yeah yeah anyway but by the time we did not wear robes but anyway the point to get there on
DAVIS: like opinions like how you like feeling like why we're deciding a certain way derided dissent

ASHLEY Like what kind of issues were like was that like

MERRITT:

COURTNEY OK so most slap on the wrist kind of like so we didn't handle like punishing. It's like a different
DAVIS: department but we handle mostly parking parking tickets but he didn't

[LAUGHTER] Issue opinions for that but another thing we did less frequently was handle disputes between students or between

organizations like that so when we handled those people would argue before the court and then we would deliberate, the nine justices.

ASHLEY Nine! That's a lot.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY We had two clerks and then we would show you what we did we would issue pickets anyway I
DAVIS: liked that process and then I was also in an organization called Baylor ambassadors where we lobby the state legislature and then also in DC for financial aid and stuff like that.

ASHLEY Interesting.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY So like going to meet lawmakers and all that stuff and it's awesome how are lobbying in some
DAVIS: way actually effected change in the law I just kind of began to realize that so much in our life is like-- it touches the law and is affected by the law. So anyway, that's why I went to law school. I wanted to go outside of Texas or I thought I might so I applied to schools in Texas all in all over kind of like Lise saying I cast a wide net so, I applied to a bunch of schools. Forgot some of the schools I applied to, including UVA. And then I get an email from Cordell.

ASHLEY Thanks, Court.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Well I was like I want someone to accept me. I didn't believe in myself. Believe in yourself,
DAVIS: kids.

Justice of the year

COURTNEY Yeah, I don't know. You have to remember. You have to remember.

DAVIS:

2013 to 2014

I know, I forgot.

ASHLEY So you got an email from Cordell.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Yes.

DAVIS:

ASHLEY Oh for the interview

MERRITT:

COURTNEY For an interview. I was like oh. So, I did my little research and was like oh this place actually

DAVIS: looks cool

[LAUGHTER]

Cut this out of the podcast.

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY So, you did no research before appl--

MERRITT:

COURTNEY No, I did but I applied to so many schools. It all blends together.

DAVIS:

ASHLEY Yeah, yeah. this is good to know. But it's fine.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY At least in the initial search. Like, some people know where they want to go. They would want

DAVIS: to go UVA. I'm not that person I don't have lawyers in my family and stuff. And my whole life has been in Texas, so I'm not really thinking about Virginia. Excuse me. Oh my gosh

[LAUGHTER]

COURTNEY So anyway.

DAVIS:

[LAUGHTER]

COURTNEY Oh my god. So anyway, I did the interview. I enjoyed speaking with Cordell and learning about

DAVIS: UVA. Got accepted and I actually never visited UVA. Probably I am not the best person to talk to--

ASHLEY Do not do this. I will interrupt the podcast.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY But I will say, I came to Charlottesville sight unseen for orientation and I love it here. I made

DAVIS: the right choice and I think like you should, of course, visit and everyone says admitted students weekend is like life changing--

ASHLEY The best.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY -- and it makes--

DAVIS:

ASHLEY It's the best.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY -- the decision for them I didn't do that. But for me, just talking to Cordell and talking to

DAVIS: students here, it was different than when I talked to people from other schools. And it seemed like you guys really wanted me, like you guys recognized I was justice of the year. No, I'm kidding.

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY We mentioned it.

MERRITT:

[LAUGHTER]

COURTNEY Not at all, who cares? But it seemed like you actually wanted me to be here and like there's--

DAVIS:

ASHLEY I wasn't even here but I feel I can feel it there are like oh I'm sure a lot of the listeners are
MERRITT: going to have options yeah I'll get a good education yeah a lot of places. But for me it was like where can I be comfortable. I'm going to be moving away from my family, from my home, where can I feel like I belong? And you guys made me feel like I would belong here and not just get a good education here. And so that's why I chose to come.

ASHLEY That was wonderful. Thank you, Court.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY It would have been a lot shorter if I wasn't interrupted with nasty looks but--

DAVIS:

[LAUGHTER]

LISE GUERRIER: That's not an interruption.

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY Jazzy jazz.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: OK well, I guess I'm glad that I'm going last here because my story is not nearly as insightful or interesting.

ASHLEY Stop that No, that's not true.

MERRITT:

Boo!

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY We're going to cut that out.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: No, no. We don't even have to cut it.

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: Some people are just kind of fall into where they go. And I think for both of you I feel like you have more of a plan especially because, as we've already established, I haven't really left because DC doesn't count.

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY OK. Now, I feel bad saying that. I'll give you DC

MERRITT:

[LAUGHTER]

I take it back.

JASMINE LEE: All right, so I knew I wanted to go to law school. I guess, I don't know the order in which I'll say this.

ASHLEY Yeah, however.

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY Just riff.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: So I was doing all of my pre-law school application stuff when I was in DC So, I was studying for the LSAT, taking the LSAT up there. And then by the time I was actually applying I was back in Richmond, and I was sort of applying all over. And I had this mindset actually, I guess similar to you guys. It just-- I'll just explain.

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: So where I didn't want to go to school, I didn't think I wanted to go to school again where I went to undergrad.

ASHLEY Yeah, I was the same. Yeah.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: I used to be those one of those undergrads who would study in the law school library.

SPEAKER: Boo.

SPEAKER: I know.

SPEAKER: I'm just kidding. We welcome you. We welcome you.

ASHLEY Hey, I was that person. Jazz, we are kindred spirits, as you know.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: So now when--

Just hide your calculators.

ASHLEY And your art history textbooks.

MERRITT:

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY No pictures.

MERRITT:

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: No calculators needed. But, now when people always complain about the undergrads being in the library, I feel like I can't speak up because--

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: -- I was that person. I've been on both sides of that situation.

ASHLEY It's fair. It's fair.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: But anyway, so I had been in the UVA system. I've gone here for undergrad. I studied in this law school a lot. And I was pretty much convinced I want to actually go to a city, like I loved being in the college town. I loved having that experience, but I wanted to actually go to law school in New York or DC or in LA, just like a different experience because I had already done the college town thing. This was my mindset going into it. UVA was actually the last school I applied to and I only applied to it because I got snowed in at my parents' house and I had nothing else to do.

ASHLEY Oh, that's good.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: I truly just figured, well I've applied to all these other schools. Let me just apply to UVA and see what happens. It kind of just happened. And then I got that email from Cordell and that kind of shifted my whole mindset of talking to him, really talking to students. And especially for me, talking to other Double Hoos and seeing that it was a very different experience from being on main grounds or central grounds, whatever you want to call it versus being here.

So, that kind of shifted my mindset and then kind of like Lise said, I was doing the math and doing all these calculations and seeing that I can get this great education and be a great place and not have to pay New York City money to do it or not have to pay LA money to be there because, newsflash, Charlottesville is not going to charge you LA or New York, or DC prices. And it was just a really nice thing to have.

SPEAKER: Cost of living.

JASMINE LEE: Yeah so I just kind of fell into coming back into UVA, but I'm so happy that it did because as everyone, I think everyone, around me knows, I wear my UVA pride.

SPEAKER: She does.

ASHLEY It's true.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: Like, everywhere. I fully--

ASHLEY It's true.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: -- believe blue and orange are--

ASHLEY It's true.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: -- the first things people know about me. And then coming to law school again this is like a falling into something that I'm really happy that I did because-- so my mother and her sister were both attorneys or are attorneys and so I had grown up seeing lawyers

SPEAKER: You're mom's a judge, I think.

[LAUGHTER]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY Yeah, that's all.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: If you ever wondered how did my mom-- mom, if you listen to this, I'm so proud of you.

ASHLEY She will, she will.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: They said her mom is a judge.

JASMINE LEE: So I always--

ASHLEY Hi, Judge Lee.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: So, I've always grown up in a courtroom or seeing it and I thought it was the most boring thing in the world. And I wanted nothing to do with it. When people used to ask do you want to be a lawyer, too? I would vehemently as a seven-year-old say absolutely not. That seems like the worst job.

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: I told you, it's coming back.

ASHLEY I know. Speak your truth.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: So then when I got to undergrad and I was in American studies and foreign affairs double major, so with American studies, I specialized in visual and popular culture and then with foreign affairs, I did European or Russian culture. So, I was doing a lot of things that tangentially touched on the law and that's what really opened my mindset to the law is more than just being in a courtroom.

[COMPUTER SOUNDS]

ASHLEY Sorry, go ahead.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: So many interruptions.

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: But, that's really when it opened my mind that there was more to the law than the litigation side that I had seen my mom and my aunt doing. And my last year of undergrad to my fourth year I was the research assistant for one of the media studies professors and I was helping him with all his copyright law material and doing the research for copyright. So I spent my third and fourth year basically calling a bunch of different artists or record labels, trying to work out copyright agreements.

And I saw more of the transactional side of the law and that's what got me interested in deciding that I actually wanted to come to law school. And I'm glad I think a lot of people who have lawyers in their family kind of feel like they get pushed into it. But they want to do it because you know their grandmother or their grandfather did it their aunts and uncles did it.

And for me it definitely wasn't like I think my mom was really surprised when I started talking about law school because I spent so much time saying how I didn't want to do it and then-- but my rationale and my reasonings for it were I see this thing that I'm interested in. I see this media, telecommunications, entertainment world. That's something you don't touch on that at all, but I found that on my own. And that's what I want to pursue and what I want to look more into. So that's what I did.

ASHLEY That's insightful How did you start off with like a-- Stop rolling your eyes! Everyone in here just
MERRITT: rolled their eyes at Jasmine.

LISE GUERRIER: I did not. My eyes were not rolled.

SPEAKER: Lise!

SPEAKER: Her eyes are tired from rolling.

JASMINE LEE: I just consider it to be more of like a falling backward into success type of thing.

ASHLEY Yeah, yeah.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: Yeah. Most people know like this is what I want to do and if you do, it often changes.

ASHLEY And I think that's important to note, right? Like you don't have to have your-- we often ask in
MERRITT: interviews like what's your five year plan? What's the three year plan? But like, we know that
might change, right?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY I think it's important to think about it, not to just--

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: You got to be flexible.

ASHLEY Exactly. I think that's right. I think it's important to think and make sure that this is the right
MERRITT: choice for you because it's expensive and it's a lot of time that you could be spending doing
something else. But at the same time, knowing that like those cheap plans could change. You
can find all new interests and passions and got to be able to work with it. Pivot.

SPEAKER: You got to pivot.

ASHLEY You got to pivot. Awesome.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Or be able to.

ASHLEY I don't know, though, that none of y'all-- like, this wasn't first choice going into it, which is
MERRITT: interesting. It wasn't for me too. Like Jasmine, my story of coming to UVA was not like-- I
wasn't one of those people like I'm going to apply-- which is wonderful those who are out there
who are all in going into the process.

SPEAKER: I mean you're making the right choice.

ASHLEY Yeah, but I think it's good though to like--

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Wa-who-wa.

ASHLEY -- do your research. Like what would you say-- yeah wa-who-wa. That's the--

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Was that like la-who-wa?

ASHLEY That's we're just going-- we're going to cut that.

MERRITT:

[LAUGHTER] We're going [INAUDIBLE].

SPEAKER: That's the name of my March Madness group.

ASHLEY La-who-wa?

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: La-who-wa.

ASHLEY Oh my gosh. Anyway.

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY I know, it is.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Still got to pay my rent.

SPEAKER: I can't--

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY Anyways, it's interesting that none of y'all-- like this wasn't-- this either wasn't on the radar or it

MERRITT: wasn't like you didn't go into the process thinking I really want to go to UVA. I want to know-- like this seems like it's the perfect school for me, which is interesting, right? I wonder why do you think that is, right? What do you think from both perspectives, why do you like-- I don't know. I don't know. Lise, take that away from me.

LISE GUERRIER: Oh, OK.

ASHLEY You see where I'm going though? I feel like you see me, Courtney.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY How did we end up here if it wasn't on the radar?

DAVIS:

ASHLEY Ish and what was it that--

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Why do you think it was-- like why do you think it wasn't?

ASHLEY Yeah, why do you think it wasn't on your radar and then like what is it for you that that

MERRITT: changed that? Like, what was it because you've all talked about this being a good community, and the cost of living, and all which are fair in that, right? Those are all things that definitely brought me to Charlottesville. But, I'm just curious if we could flush that out a little bit more. Why originally was it not the number one and what was it that like tipped those scales for you?

SPEAKER: OK.

ASHLEY Does that makes sense?

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Well like I said, Courtney here

DAVIS:

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY Thank you, thank you.

MERRITT:

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER: Justice of the year.

JASMINE LEE: You may call me Justice Davis, going forward.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER: Come on, Jazz. OK.

[INAUDIBLE]

COURTNEY Like I said, I'm from Texas and so part of the reason it wasn't on my radar is just like I was

DAVIS: looking at Texas schools and then well, I was really looking all over. But, when I was like I want

to go somewhere different, I wasn't really thinking Virginia. Obviously, I applied to UVA and some other Virginia schools, but it was mostly because it's close to DC

ASHLEY Oh so did you go into it thinking DC?

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Yeah. Exactly. So, that's more-- I thought I would probably want to end up in DC After
DAVIS: graduating from law school. So, I applied to DC schools, some Virginia schools, California and then just like some other ones where I thought I might be a good fit. also just being honest, Virginia wasn't really on my radar because I had an idea of it. As a black person--

ASHLEY Yeah, yeah.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: City, state, or school or both?

COURTNEY The state.

DAVIS:

ASHLEY Interesting. OK.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Because like I said, I applied to a few schools in Virginia. And also, my parents, but particularly
DAVIS: my dad, was kind of weary. He was like you know, if I were you-- but then when I was getting acceptances from some Virginia schools, he was like hmm, well. It was just based on his experiences in the state many years ago, so that was just a factor.

ASHLEY Which I assume were not positive.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY Yeah, but he had never been to Charlottesville. So then it wasn't on my radar because of
DAVIS: where I was from and then just my perception of the state as a whole, which is not fair. But--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ASHLEY With limited experience in like--

MERRITT:

COURTNEY But then as I started gaining experience through my contact with the people here at UVA, and

DAVIS: then just like talking to students, like black students, but other students hear about their experiences and like asking candid questions about what their experiences are here, then I just became more comfortable about the idea of coming here.

ASHLEY
MERRITT: Yeah which I think-- I want you all to answer that question too, but I think it's a good segue into a big question that I often get, right? I know that-- well I mentioned this earlier. They can't see us, but do you not realize that this is four amazing, wonderfully, brilliant, and amazing black women in this room and that we all have very unique experiences here in Charlottesville here at the law school.

But a question that I often get, is that right? Especially from, not just black applicants, from people from all over the country, all over the world, all races, all genders is like what that experience is like here. Especially like in the post August 11th and 12th and other perceptions of small town Virginia, right? So if y'all are comfortable talking about that, about your experiences. Not that it's representative of the black experience. I don't want people to think that, but your specific experience and how you've interacted with the community. I think people would love to hear I mean, I feel like you've already gone, Court but if Lise--

LISE GUERRIER: So I can quickly do the first one and jump into the second question. But I think UVA, and they tie in together, wasn't on my radar initially for some of the reasons that Courtney mentioned. I'm from the city, like city, city.

[LAUGHTER]

LISE GUERRIER: And--

SPEAKER: That was no shade at Dallas.

[LAUGHTER]

COURTNEY I'm from the city too, guys.

DAVIS:

LISE GUERRIER: I mean, you know, I honestly feel like everything I say is just--

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER: We love you

LISE GUERRIER: Yeah, I don't think our listeners--

[LAUGHTER]

LISE GUERRIER: We can have a poll at the end. Send your answers in. What I meant was Charlottesville is called a city. My understanding of a city-- and I've also lived in New York. So for me, my perception of city was very different. And it's also very dark here at night.

[LAUGHTER]

LISE GUERRIER: So just like the things that--

ASHLEY There are no street lights. It takes some getting used to.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: So it was a panic for me the first time I visited in the sunset because I just never used my high beams as a normal thing. That is a normal thing.

SPEAKER: You should not need that. You don't need that.

LISE GUERRIER: No, not like in Charlottesville. But if I'm on 64, no, 60?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

LISE GUERRIER: If I'm on the interstate.

SPEAKER: No.

LISE GUERRIER: Yes you do.

ASHLEY Sometimes. If there's nobody in front of me, I'll sometimes put them on.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: Yeah, if there's nobody there if I'm on 29.

SPEAKER: You can do that in your sleep.

LISE GUERRIER: Yeah you, can do that in your sleep. Good for you. But I'm used to my tax dollars paying for street lights.

[LAUGHTER]

LISE GUERRIER: I mean, granted the roads here are better so I see where the investment is.

ASHLEY Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Priorities, priorities.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: So, I'm just saying there were a lot of adjustments. My perception of what a city was, was not Charlottesville. And also includes a lot more championships, but anyway.

SPEAKER: Oh my gosh!

SPEAKER: Just daggers. I know. I just don't--

LISE GUERRIER: OK, OK. Reeling it back in.

[LAUGHTER]

LISE GUERRIER: So I think that it took me actually doing more investigative research into what Charlottesville was. And--

ASHLEY For yourself though, right?

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: For myself

ASHLEY Versus what just hearing what people tell you, right?

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: Exactly.

ASHLEY Yeah, which I think is important.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: And then there were also just long term goals that I had in terms of I'm in a long term relationship. Well, I guess at that time--

SPEAKER: She's engaged.

LISE GUERRIER: At that time, it was a long-- I had been with somebody for five years. I mean, now we're getting married. But in that process just thinking about OK, do I want to live somewhere where I'm spending exorbitant amounts of money or how easy is it for them to come visit me or how expensive. Those things play a role. Granted, Charlottesville not necessarily the easiest but it's

definitely a lot more affordable, especially if you fly to Richmond.

So, I really started thinking about why should UVA be a top 10 school. What makes it this school versus looking at it as a a number, but how it got that number. Then I realized that that was with merit. And so I think that a lot of us will have perceptions on school just based off of what we hear from the general media or what US news reports say, but once I actually started looking into it-- so I think what changed it for me is actually doing my research and seeing what the life was like and realizing that this was the life that I wanted for now.

And then how is it as a black woman? I think in general, as a person of color you're already in a marginalized group and as a woman in the law, you're already in a marginalized group so it's like a double whammy. But I will say that in Charlottesville, with everything that has gone on, I think that--

ASHLEY Which was y'all's first days here.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: First weekend.

SPEAKER: Yeah, first week of school.

SPEAKER: Like move in.

SPEAKER: I moved in a couple of days before.

SPEAKER: Not very reassuring for my dad.

SPEAKER: My dad wouldn't let me move in. We just stayed and watch it in Richmond.

LISE GUERRIER: Yeah I thought-- I mean reckless to say, I didn't have cable yet, didn't turn on the news, didn't know I was going on. I thought that there was like a fair, like a parade going on at the downtown mall because I live close to the downtown mall.

ASHLEY Lise, I know. I know you told me.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: So I just walk over like hey, I'm here.

SPEAKER: No, you didn't.

LISE GUERRIER: Yeah I did because I was just walking.

ASHLEY You didn't know.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: And then I saw and I was like oh so I was like, whew. But I think that as a lawyer there's just like a lot of things that you're going to have to confront in your life, comfortable and uncomfortable. And I think we have this-- law school gives you a book perception of what that means, but being here gives you a real world application of what it means. And when you're translating, like I was here. I see how that translates into a case.

And I also see how that translates into social media. Very different things. I would say I've become more social activist. I've developed a better mindset in terms of my social presence and my legal presence. And I think that unfortunately just as a black woman, as a person of color, you just have to bear bigger burden. Your cross is bigger.

But I will say at UVA, you're bearing it with people who are very strong people, so it doesn't feel as bad. I mean, then again, the higher you go in your social status, the harder it is to be a person of color because you feel more noticed. But I will say at UVA, definitely my expectations to reality did not match up. It has been a much better experience than I thought it would be. Everyone in this room I'm extremely close with. And because we just all love each other as people--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: We do love each other. This podcast might be a little misleading, but we tease each other with love.

ASHLEY Yeah. It's true. That is true. You know it's true. Don't even give that side--

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Lise is done she's--

[LAUGHTER]

LISE GUERRIER: I'm drinking my coffee now.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: You should just take over now, Jasmine. I

JASMINE LEE: OK. So bringing it back for the Virginians who are listening to this, so UVA was always on my radar and I guess a lot of what I have to talk about, I guess it's always going to be related back to me having also gone here for undergrad and having also been in the growing up in Richmond my entire life. And so I think--

ASHLEY Your base point is different.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: Yeah, my base point is different. Like UVA was obviously on my radar. It had been on my radar my whole life. I will say both of my parents are from the Midwest and so, I didn't grow up-- like I grew up the most--

ASHLEY A southerner.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: Yeah, I grew up at most knowing UVA versus Virginia Tech in sports because when you go to school in Virginia, we had a day where everyone chose a side. I had no concept of caring. My mom grew up watching Michigan. I had no concept of what that meant so, I would just pick whatever shirt my friends would like let me borrow for school that day. That's kind of--

ASHLEY How things have changed

MERRITT:

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: Now I am a committed UVA fan, of course.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: So, not marrying someone from Virginia Tech?

JASMINE LEE: It would be, boy you better take it.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER: That's the thing as a black well I can't speak.

[LAUGHTER]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

LISE GUERRIER: It's on my hand. I talk with my hands. OK? I'm going to turn it into a necklace, all right? I'm just saying a black woman

SPEAKER: It's a wonderful ring. It's beautiful.

LISE GUERRIER: I'm just saying I didn't find my person in Charlottesville, so I just want to put out--

ASHLEY I did, so what are you about to say?

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: I'm just saying as a PSA

[LAUGHTER]

LISE GUERRIER: As a PSA, if you got someone and you think you're going to find better in Charlottesville, I might reconsider.

ASHLEY Oh, I fervently disagree.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: No.

JASMINE LEE: OK I'm bringing this back. I'm bringing this back.

ASHLEY Reign us in, reign us in. Miss engaged over here is giving relationship--

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: I don't know what she's talking about. You said you had a five year relationship before coming here.

SPEAKER: I'm saying that--

SPEAKER: Don't say it.

SPEAKER: What are you saying?

SPEAKER: You said don't say it and then you ask me what I'm going to say. You go off the record.

ASHLEY People listening might think we're crazy.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: We're not but you asked as a black woman experience and then we said that our experiences aren't representative of the whole and I am not speaking from my personal experience but from a general idea of there are not many people of color in Charlottesville. So if you--

ASHLEY Agree to disagree. Fine, go on. Go on.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: As a city, OK. OK.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER: This is painful.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER: Yeah I mean, you have options but you don't have a ton of options. And so--

SPEAKER: It depends on what you're interested in and all that.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: I just said.

SPEAKER: Well you're just assuming--

SPEAKER: I think you're cutting out some options. Just going to direct over here with what you're saying. That is why I preempted by saying if you are someone who is specifically looking for somebody of color--

SPEAKER: I don't remember hearing that.

SPEAKER: I didn't hear that.

SPEAKER: That was a crucial step that you missed.

SPEAKER: Oh my goodness.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: I think in general, no matter who you're looking for, I think that-- we'll we're not coming to law school to find--

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER: We're here to study the law.

SPEAKER: OK, so anyway.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: There's no way that you could live in Virginia, go to high school in Virginia, and not at least know about UVA.

ASHLEY Thank you, Jasmine.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: Yes. That's what I'm trying to talk about. This is for all the locals.

ASHLEY This was on your radar.

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER: Non-Massachusetts people.

ASHLEY Yeah, Non-New Englanders. Non-West Coasters.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: Yeah, that's right because we have so many people here who come from Virginia or Maryland, North Carolina things like that.

ASHLEY Yeah we're familiar with UVA.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: And that's fine too and I just want to-- I'm addressing you guys there.

[LAUGHTER]

JASMINE LEE: But UVA was always on my radar and like I said earlier, I thought I would go somewhere else

because I've already done this experience for law school and it took talking to the people, seeing the experiences, doing my research again. Because obviously, it's a great school. And if you're looking at UVA, you probably have other also amazing options to choose from. So I think it takes doing that research and really seeing what do you want and what do you value in the school besides the academics. The academics, obviously you already know the academics are great, but it's the other--

ASHLEY What are your priorities?

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: What are your priorities? What do you want after school? Like when I was looking at schools out in LA and out in California, my mindset was I will go there for three years to have something different and then I want to come back to DC They would spend a lot of time

ASHLEY That sounded more judgy than I meant it to be.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: They would spend a lot of time having me talk to their east coast alum and then it just hit me that seems crazy to go out there and talk to maybe-- there are four or five people who made it back to the East Coast immediately versus being at a school that can help me, like has the infrastructure to put me right where I want to be after school.

So, that was helpful for me and then again, looking at my experience as a black woman, I think especially looking at it-- if we're talking about like August 11th and 12th everyone has such different experiences with that like if you talked to 3Ls now, they were all doing like OGI and callbacks. And I think their experience is so different from ours because so many of our class that was moving into Charlottesville and experiencing it for the first time. Whereas for me, I had already experienced Charlottesville for four years. I had an image in my head of what Charlottesville was.

I had an image of what the town meant to me and what it felt like and I was going to move in that weekend with my parents. And even before it hit the news, I remember seeing it on friends of mine who were still in Charlottesville on their Instagrams and their Snapchats. And that was the shocking thing to me because I saw it on these things. I remember going downstairs, showing it to my parents, them thinking it wasn't as big of a deal at first because it didn't-- no one knew what all it was. My first images were coming from my phone and coming from my laptop of it.

ASHLEY Your personal like your personal connection like through your friends.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: Right. It was coming from my--

ASHLEY Not CNN.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: Right and that was just a very weird way to have it. So then that morning, thought I was still moving in. My dad says you're not going to Charlottesville today and that was just a very different experience. What I think now so I think it's sort of like a-- not even just undergrad to law school, but I look at it as a pre and post August 11th experience, and how I see Charlottesville and I see Charlottesville as very different. And that could be also with age and also the fact being in law school.

Well, there's a lot of things that contribute to that, but I think that there is a higher level of activism in the town that I really like seeing. And I have grown into more and I've been more involved in and having more discussions and dialogues and things than I did in undergrad. And I think even on the undergrad grounds, there's a lot of that happening.

There's no way that those things couldn't happen. It's interesting to be in a place that had that experience and is actively saying well, no matter what else, the students in the community are going to push for something to come out of this and to push for something to happen. And I think having been here before and to see both perspectives, I think I might notice that in a way that other people don't.

ASHLEY I think that's right. I agree with that.

MERRITT:

JASMINE LEE: That's my Charlottesville

ASHLEY Yeah, Court. I don't know why I called on you. Why are you raising your hand in here?

MERRITT:

COURTNEY I just wanted to add that something I think that is really cool is that like Ashley said, or maybe
DAVIS: Lise, I don't know. The fact is like we're really close. We're all black women in this room and there's a kind of solidarity to that but we also are all very involved in different ways that kind of

correspond to what we are interested in.

So like all of us are on the board of BLSA, the Black Law Students Association, in different ways. Lise is a firm relations chair, I'm education chair, Jasmine's membership chair. But then we're also involved in things outside of BLSA. So, we're all peer advisors but Jasmine's in SBA, the Student Bar Association, of the student government. She's going to be our president next year. And involved in everything else.

[LAUGHTER]

And I'm a writing fellow and--

SPEAKER: Courtney is teaching the children. Teaching the next generation of scholars. So they too can be justice courts

COURTNEY I did the Innocence Project last year and whatever else and then I don't know what Lise does.

DAVIS:

[LAUGHTER]

COURTNEY Is also very involved. She works in admissions.

DAVIS:

ASHLEY Financial aid.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: Quick to reject me.

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY Admissions and financial aid is what I meant to say.

MERRITT:

LISE GUERRIER: It's cool.

COURTNEY Yes, we're all black women and like I said, there's some solidarity in that we found each other

DAVIS: and we're friends and we love each other. But also, there's space for us--

ASHLEY Yeah to find your other communities.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY

Exactly

DAVIS:

ASHLEY

Find your interests.

MERRITT:

COURTNEY

And to do like things that we care about in different ways and I think that's really cool. We're all thriving in different ways.

DAVIS:

ASHLEY

I love that. Thank you.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER:

Just like a random thing. Courtney kind of said the libel.

ASHLEY

Are you about to plug libel right now?

MERRITT:

SPEAKER:

No, well just because I think--

SPEAKER:

They don't know.

ASHLEY

Oh, say what it is.

MERRITT:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER:

I mean I'm sure other schools have things like that.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, the law reviews.

SPEAKER:

Yes Jasmine is very involved

SPEAKER:

So is Courtney.

SPEAKER:

So libel is like our SNL for law school and--

SPEAKER:

A variety show.

SPEAKER:

Yeah it's like a variety show. And like I said, I'm sure other schools also do that, but it wasn't something that was even kind of on my radar or something I wanted to get involved in. I had done musical theater and stuff in high school and I had done dance and everything and I had

no real thoughts of continuing with it.

But that is something that, I don't know, maybe almost like 200 students in the law school get involved and they rewrite the sketches, we are singing, we have a band. This law school has at least three student bands because people are just that talented. We just have that and I think that's something that is maybe not unique to UVA, at least something that we really celebrate in the culture within UVA.

ASHLEY You're uniqueness, and the talents besides your brilliance, right?

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: I am in libel and I'm not talented so that's something else that's cool. You can do it. I don't sing--

SPEAKER: You're still loved for it. They're still supporting you And actually, Courtney this year is playing Ashley.

ASHLEY Which I am terrified to see.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: It's going to be great. And Lise will be coming to watch the show.

[LAUGHTER]

ASHLEY All right. I feel like we're going over on time. Cordell's going to kill me for how long this podcast

MERRITT: is, but thank y'all for joining me. This was good.

SPEAKER: Welcome to brown table talk.

SPEAKER: Brown table talk.

SPEAKER: FYI I think that the Jordan talk is out.

SPEAKER: It is out that's why I got on my phone.

SPEAKER: Oh yeah, otherwise confirmed.

ASHLEY Oh OK to be discussed post-pod.

MERRITT:

SPEAKER: Yes. Post-pod.

ASHLEY Thank you all for listening. Hopefully you can join us for the next episode of Law Schooled. Be

MERRITT: good.