



## Season 1 | Episode 5 | Break Through

Taylor Peters, Host: PREVIOUSLY ON FEARLESS...

Richard Lennox, Director, Student Counseling Center: Then of course March 2020 hits and everyone was scrambling.

Lauren, Student: To not underplay it, it's heartbreaking.

Carol Sumner, Vice President, Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: I don't know how to process the loss of life, loss of jobs, loss of homes.

Michael Clintsman: People don't realize when you take someone's livelihood away the implications that may have.

(Music)

Peters: FROM TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY WE BRING YOU FEARLESS, A PODCAST FEATURING THE UNTOLD STORIES OF THE SCHOOL WE LOVE SO DEARLY. IN THIS EPISODE, WE FEATURE THE DREAMERS, THE VISIONARIES, THE ONES WHO USED OR FOUND THEIR GIFTS DURING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC. THESE ARE THE STORIES OF HOW WE WELCOMED THE CHALLENGE AND WORKED TOGETHER AS ONE... FIGHTING AGAINST ONE ENEMY... US VS. COVID. THIS IS EPISODE 5- BREAKTHROUGH

(Music)

(Students in SUB, Football Games)

Peters: CAN WE ALL JUST TAKE A BREATH FOR A SECOND? LOOK BACK AND APPRECIATE THAT WE ALL HAVE COME A LONG WAY. AND WE ARE STILL PUSHING THROUGH. I KNOW, THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID IS REAL TODAY. OUR WORLD, OUR SOCIETY, OUR CULTURE. EVERYTHING FROM OUR HABITS TO OUR LIFESTYLES HAS EVOLVED. THAT EVOLUTION HAS MADE US MORE AWARE, HOPEFULLY MORE COMPASSIONATE, MORE DETERMINED AND MORE MOVED BY THE HUMAN SPIRIT. AND WE BEGIN THIS EPISODE WITH TWO WOMEN WHO EMBODY THAT. I'D LIKE TO TAKE YOU TO 18TH STREET AND TEXAS TECH PARKWAY. IT'S WHERE WE MET CASSIE CHRISTOPHER AND SOFIA CHAPMAN, SITTING TOGETHER AT A TABLE IN THE UNUSUALLY QUIET ATRIUM INSIDE THE SCHOOL OF LAW. THEIR ROLES ARE VERY DIFFERENT BUT THEY COMPLIMENT EACH OTHER WELL. SOFIA IS THE ASSOCIATE DEAN OF STUDENT LIFE... CASSIE, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR BAR SUCCESS. SOFIA SHOWED UP APOLOGIZING PROFUSELY... SHE WAS A MERE 2 AND A HALF MINUTES LATE- WHICH I WOULD NOT CONSIDER TO BE A LATE ENTRANCE BY ANY STRETCH... ANYWAY, SHE HAD AN ISSUE WITH HER GARAGE DOOR... FOUND A SOLUTION ON YOUTUBE- OF COURSE AND SHE MADE IT. THANKFULLY. SOFIA IS METICULOUS AND ORGANIZED... SHE DOES NOT LIKE BEING LATE.

Sofia Chapman, Associate Dean of Student Life: I found a quick YouTube and I said 'okay, I can do this!'

Cassie Christopher, Associate Dean for Bar Success: Is YouTube the repository for all human knowledge? I think it is!

Peters: THAT WAS CASSIE, AND I HAVE TO SAY I AGREE. THESE WOMEN ARE EXCEEDINGLY KIND. THEIR PRIMARY GOAL AS LEADERS IN THE SCHOOL OF LAW IS TO CREATE OF CULTURE WHERE STUDENTS ARE PROVIDED FOR, WHERE THEY'RE ENCOURAGED, WHERE THEY SUCCEED. IF YOU'RE LISTENING WITH LITTLE TO NO KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LAW SCHOOL... SAME. BEFORE I TALKED TO SOFIA AND CASSIE, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW. THEY TAUGHT ME A LOT IN THE HOUR WE SPOKE. I LEARNED THAT LAW SCHOOL IS EXPENSIVE IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN I EXPECTED. IT'S TAXING ON A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL. HERE'S WHAT I MEAN...

Christopher: So, preparing for the bar exam is, of course, the three-year process of being a law student... You learn a lot while you're in law school that helps you with the bar exam. They take a cram course to study for the bar exam, those can be upwards of \$4,000.

Peters: SO, YOU GRADUATE FROM LAW SCHOOL, THEN SIGN UP IMMEDIATELY FOR 8-10 WEEKS OF STUDYING AND STUDYING ALONE. I'M TALKING A FULL TIME JOB CONSISTING OF READING, MEMORIZING, TESTING, STUDYING, SLEEP AND MORE STUDYING... CRAM SESSIONS ARE MOSTLY ONLINE ANYWAY, SO THE VIRTUAL WORLD DIDN'T AFFECT THAT PART AS MUCH, BUT...

Christopher: There was this whole other layer of stress and anxiety. The uncertainty of 'what am I working toward' during COVID was tremendous.

Peters: LET'S SAY YOU \*DO TAKE IT THOUGH. STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE IN MAY, TAKE THE TEST IN JULY...BUT THEY DON'T GET RESULTS UNTIL NOVEMBER.

Christopher: That means you graduate in May and no attorney salary until right around Thanksgiving.

Peters: AND THAT'S IF YOU PASS THE FIRST TIME...IF YOU DON'T, THE NEXT BAR EXAM TAKES PLACE IN FEBRUARY. MEANING, ANOTHER CRAM SESSION IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I CANNOT IMAGINE THE STRESS OF THIS. IN A NORMAL YEAR, THROW IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND.... WOW.

Chapman: We started hearing about the bar exam and what that was going to look like... Cassie, feel free to jump in, but trying to hear from New Mexico and Texas what they were going to do and how are we going to start to help these students.

Christopher: Well, the stress and anxiety that students experienced in 2020 and for the February bar in 2021, was significantly higher than in normal years. So the bar exam is always stressful, in the best-case scenario, the bar exam is incredibly stressful. Everyone who comes to law school is a type A overachiever, that's why they're here... otherwise they'd be doing something else with their lives.

Peters: THERE WAS SO MUCH BACK-AND-FORTH THAT EXISTED ACROSS THE ENTIRE COUNTRY REGARDING BAR EXAMS... WOULD THEY BE RESCHEDULED, CANCELED COMPLETELY? SHOULD I CONTINUE WITH THE CRAM SESSION OR GIVE UP ALL TOGETHER? SO MANY QUESTIONS.

Christopher: So, 2020 was an unusual year, for reasons perhaps too boring for your listeners... But we don't normally have a large number of students who take the New Mexico bar exam...

Peters: STUDENTS TYPICALLY TAKE THE BAR IN THE STATE THEY'D LIKE TO PRACTICE, IT'S WHERE YOU'RE CERTIFIED... UNLESS YOU TAKE THE UBE, UNIFORM BAR EXAM... THEN YOU CAN PRACTICE IN A NUMBER OF STATES THAT ACCEPT UBE CERTIFICATION.

THERE WERE 39 TO BE EXACT--- NEBRASKA, SOUTH CAROLINA, UTAH, COLORADO, WASHINGTON, OREGON, IDAHO, NORTH DAKOTA, ARKANSAS, MISSOURI, OHIO, WYOMING, MONTANA, WEST VIRGINIA, ALABAMA... YOU GET IT. AND IN 2020, TEXAS WAS NOT ONE OF THOSE STATES... BUT NEW MEXICO WAS.

Christopher: So, for those of use in Lubbock, Albuquerque isn't far so most of our students elected to take the uniform bar exam in New Mexico that summer... To their credit, the board of bar examiners in New Mexico arranged for multiple locations where there were no more than 4 examinees in a room... so they tested 400 people in 40 different rooms... did I do that math right...

Peters: IT'S 100 ROOMS, BUT YOU GET THE PICTURE... TO ACCOMMODATE THE 400 STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN ALBUQUERQUE TO SIT FOR THE BAR.

Christopher: Normally they'd have a convention center and have everyone on the floor of a basketball arena or something...

Peters: AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, THIS WOULD TAKE A LOT OF PRECISE COORDINATION... CASSIE AND SOFIA TOLD US ONE STORY ABOUT A TEST THAT WAS ADMINISTERED AT A HOTEL... THE STUDENTS WOULD TAKE THE TEST IN HOTEL ROOMS WITH THE DOOR OPEN, AND AN ADMINISTRATOR WOULD WALK UP AND DOWN THE HALL OVERSEEING THEM. THE THINGS WE DID DURING COVID... COVID PROCEDURES AND RESTRICTIONS VARIED BY THE STATE, AND YOU MAY REMEMBER THAT NEW MEXICO WAS STRICT. SO, TO HOST AN EVENT AS IMPORANT, AS LIFE-SHAPING AS THE BAR... WOULD BE QUITE THE TASK. INDIVIDUALS FROM OUT OF STATE WERE REQUIRED TO QUARANTINE FOR 14 DAYS WHEN THEY ARRIVED. AND THAT INCLUDED STUDENTS FROM TEXAS TECH THERE TO SIT FOR THE BAR.

Chapman: 58 went to take the exam in New Mexico- of the 58, we assisted with funding to help them, we assisted 50 students. With housing and food needs and gas and travel to get there....

Christopher: Because New Mexico at the time had a two-week quarantine, anyone entering New Mexico was required to quarantine themselves for two solid weeks before interacting with anyone and the Board of Bar Examiners announced you were going to have to prove before you sat for the exam that you quarantined so they were asking for hotel bills and when you checked in and that type of thing.

Peters: SOFIA AND CASSIED HELPED NEARLY 60 STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE UBE IN NEW MEXICO. MOST STAYED IN HOTELS... OTHERS IN AIR BNB'S... AND A FEW WITH FAMILY. THEY GOT \$75,000 DONATED TO HELP WITH FOOD AND HOUSING... IT WAS A BIG TO-DO. A LOT OF PEOPLE AND TIME, NIGHTS WITH LITTLE SLEEP AND HOURS, AND HOUR AND HOURS OF PLANNING... A LOT OF IT BY SOFIA WHO SPENT DAYS ON THE PHONE NEGOTIATING HOTEL COSTS. AND IT PAID OFF. BECAUSE WHAT HAPPENED IN NEW MEXICO IS REMARKABLE. THAT STORY IS COMING UP ON FEARLESS.

(Music)

(Birds Chirping)

Peters: IT'S A CALM TUESDAY AFTERNOON OUTSIDE THE SUB...

Peters: So, what's your major?

Gabby Hansard, Student: I'm pre- nursing, so I don't have a declared major. I'm applying for nursing school in the fall...

Peters: That is so cool!

Hansard: Thank you, I actually want to do forensic nursing.

Peters: THAT'S WHERE WE'RE SITTING WITH GABBY HANSARD. SHE HAS ONLY ONE YEAR OF COLLEGE UNDER HER BELT, SO SHE IS YOUNG. I WAS IMPRESSED WITH HER.

Hansard: I'm actually doing undergraduate research right now. I was at the lab this morning, would you like to see a picture?

Peters: Yes, please! I would love to.

Peters: HER FIRST YEAR ON CAMPUS WAS COMPLICATED, SHE GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL IN WACO IN THE SPRING OF 2020... SHE DIDN'T GET THE NORMAL HIGH SCHOOL SEND OFF... NO PROM, NO GRADUATION... THEN SHE COMES TO TECH...NO CONVENTIONAL FRESHMAN YEAR... BUT YOU CAN HEAR THAT SHE IS UPBEAT... AND AS A STUDENT, SHE IS DEVOTED.

Hansard: So, see everything releases specific volatile organic compounds...

Peters: YEAH, GABBY IS SMART AND DRIVEN. SHE KNOWS WHAT SHE'S LOOKING FOR AND WHO SHE IS. SHE WANTED TO FIND A PLACE TO SPREAD HER WINGS AND TEXAS TECH HAD EVERYTHING SHE WANTED. ESPECIALLY IN A NON-COVID YEAR. SHE IS THIRSTY FOR A CHALLENGING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND A SOCIAL ONE.

Hansard: Without that there is no college experience. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure there are people who function fine with limited social contact? But that's not a fulfilling way to live.

Gabby: It's absolutely crucial for the college experience. Without it, things would be really bland.

Peters: SHE MET PEOPLE BY GETTING INVOLVED, EVERYWHERE SHE COULD. BUT IT WASN'T WITHOUT SOME ROADBLOCKS. HER ROOMMATE NEVER SHOWED UP FOR SCHOOL... SHE EMAILED AND CALLED AND NEVER GOT A REPLY. SO THAT WAS THAT.

Hansard: Part of me did miss out on getting that close bond you get with a roommate. It definitely wasn't what I expected... you build up an expectation based on what you hear from other people, and what you see in the media of what college is going to be like. And then you go there and it's completely definitely different, not a bad different, just different.

Peters: I CAN TELL THAT GABBY IS PERSISTENT THOUGH, SHE WASN'T GOING TO LET MUCH PREVENT HER FROM GETTING EVERYTHING SHE HOPED FOR FROM THIS PLACE.

Hansard: Signing up for student orgs was a little challenging... I felt disconnected because I was in these organizations, but I wasn't physically there...

Peters: SHE STARTED HER OWN PEER REVIEW PROGRAM WITHIN HER COLLEGE. SHE MET REGULARLY WITH OTHER PRE-NURSING STUDENTS... AND THAT HELPED KEEP HER MOTIVATED. EVEN WHEN THINGS WERE WEIRD AND DISCONNECTED.

Hansard: I would say it was a little bit of a dry season in my life. I made mistakes here and there, had ups and downs, and it was hard to meet people at first but making friends takes time.

Peters: SHE'S RIGHT ABOUT THAT... NO STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS WERE MEETING IN PERSON, FEW CLASSES WERE OFFERING ANYTHING IN PERSON. BUT SHE PERSISTED... AND AS THE CAMPUS STARTED TO OPEN BACK UP, SHE FELT THE VALIDATION SHE NEEDED. THAT THIS WAS HOME.

Hansard: I know this is where I'm meant to be, I'm convinced of that. Tech is great academically, I did research on the school after I was accepted, I found out the nursing program is number 2 in the state... I was like 'wow, this is where I'm going to be' I love this place, I bleed red and black.

(Music)

Peters: YOU REMEMBER ALIZA WONG... SHE'S INTERIM DEAN AND A PROFESSOR IN THE HONORS COLLEGE. BUT DURING COVID SHE EXPANDED HER JOB DUTIES.

Wong: It feels like a lifetime ago.

Peters: IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY OF 2020, SHE WAS WATCHING REPORTS OF COVID BUILDING MOMENTUM IN ASIA.

Reporter I: The first alert of a mysterious illness was circulating to Wuhan hospitals.

Reporter II: China has reported a 50% increase in the number of people who have died from COVID-19.

Wong: ... I had been following the situation because I'm Chinese American. I'm also an Italianess by training, I do modern Italian History. A couple of weeks after Wuhan broke out and we all kind of watched in horror... we were watching cases build in Milan and that's where the center of my research is, in Lombardy in the north of Milan we were seeing astronomical numbers of COVID cases.

Peters: IT WAS PERSONAL FOR A LOT OF REASONS... AND THAT SPARKED DRIVE. SEE, ALIZA ISN'T ONE FOR IDLE HANDS. SHE'S A PLANNER, A WORKER AND A LEADER. SHE HAD ACCESS TO STUDENTS AND FACULTY THAT SHE KNEW COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE. AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY DID.

Wong: In Italy, as the situation became more, and more, and more serious, their engineers were coming up with ways to solve the shortages, so they were trying to 3D print their own face shields... I was texting my teaching partner John Carrell, he's an associate professor of engineering in the honors college... I kept sending links saying 'can we do this? I was doing this before we even had our first case in Lubbock, because he has a 3D printing lab in the honors college. So, we were just having these private conversations.

Peters: SHE WAS MAKING A PLAN. THEY ALL WERE. AND WHEN THE TIME CAME, THEY FELT READY, AS READY AS YOU CAN BE. SHE HAD A PREMONITION ABOUT HOW COVID WOULD IMPACT LUBBOCK AND THE PANHANDLE... SHE HAD A FEELING IT WOULD LOOK QUITE DIFFERENT HERE AT HOME THAN OTHER PLACES IN THE STATE.

Wong: I knew if it hit west Texas, it would hit us really different than anywhere else. Houston, Dallas, San Antonio... Major cities, major hubs. They were going to have enormous numbers and I was guessing all the resources would go to those large receiving hospitals. Here in west Texas, Lubbock is the hub; we are the people for a 5 hour circumference they would be coming to us.

Peters: SHE WASN'T INTIMATED BY THAT. IN FACT, I THINK SHE WELCOMED THE CHALLENGE OF IT. EVEN A PROFESSOR WOULD ADMIT THAT THE GREATEST TEACHER IN LIFE... IS LIFE ITSELF. THINGS BECAME REAL IN LATE MARCH ON A DATE THAT ALIZA SAYS SHE CAN'T FORGET.

Wong: I remember it was March 22, that's my son's birthday. We had a small gathering of his friends over for dinner, within the limits of what the city advised. And as we had dinner, the ordinance came down that we would not be coming back to campus.

Peters: THIS WAS IT. THEY'D BEEN READY FOR THE RIGHT TIME TO TAKE ACTION, AND IT WAS NOW.

Wong: Simon started organizing us and we met on zoom for the first time...

Peters: THAT'S SIMON WILLIAMS... HE'S WITH THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT THE HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER.

Wong: ...before we knew how to mute or share screens or do any of those good things. So, Simon started organizing us and John Carrell... I sent him open source files for 3D printing he started printing brims for face shields.

Peters: HE STARTED USING A 3-D PRINTER TO MAKE PROTOTYPES OF BRIMS FOR FACE SHIELDS. THESE BRIMS EXTEND ABOUT TWO INCHES FROM THE FOREHEAD, WITH TWO PRONGS ON EITHER SIDE TO ATTACH A PLASTIC SHIELD. THEY ARE KEPT TO YOUR FACE WITH A PIECE OF ELASTIC THAT WRAPS AROUND THE BACK OF THE HEAD. AND AS ALIZA HAD EXPECTED, REQUESTS WEREN'T JUST COMING IN FROM LUBBOCK HOSPITALS, BUT MEDICAL CENTERS ACROSS WEST TEXAS.

Wong: Dr. Hillman from Monohas wrote to us. He said 'you guys are the nearest hospital to us. I have one ventilator. What do I do?' He searched through the closets and was looking to find a way to protect his people. He found 2 others from the 70's. He said I have no shields for our people. Within 3 days we printed 2 dozen.

Peters: THEY QUICKLY GRADUATED TO DEVELOPING OTHER HOSPITAL EQUIPMENT- INTUBATION CHAMBERS, SPLITTERS, MORE AND MORE AND MORE FACE SHIELDS. IN THE END, THEY DEVELOPED AND SHIPPED OFF MORE THAN 20,000 SHIELDS AND 3,000 CHAMBERS. STUDENTS IN THE HONORS COLLEGE WERE COMING IN DAILY TO PRODUCE THESE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO MENTION HERE, THAT THEY GOT SPECIAL APPROVAL TO WORK ON THESE PROJECTS ON CAMPUS. STRICT GUIDELINES AND SOCIAL DISTANCING WERE ESSENTIAL FOR THE STUDENTS AND FACULTY THAT WERE WORKING TOGETHER. WHEN WE GOT TO THIS PART OF THE CONVERSATION, ALIZA WAS SURE TO EMPHASIZE HOW MUCH OF A GROUP EFFORT THIS WAS. HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE GOT INVOLVED. JOE HEPPERT, FROM THE LAST EPISODE, WORKED WITH FACULTY TO GATHER AND DONATE PPE THAT WAS SITTING IN LABS, DURING THE MONTHS THEY WERE UNABLE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECTS.

Joe Heppert: There was a lot of personal protective equipment that was going to be sitting idle in laboratories. We recognized that there was important protective equipment available where there were huge shortages showing up in the health care community. The response was overwhelming, well over 100,000 pairs of gloves"

Peters: ALIZA AND JOE BOTH LEARNED SOMETHING IMPORTANT ABOUT THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM.

Wong: I'm not a health care professional, I'm not on the front line, we cannot ease the burden on our nurses and doctors... but I can damn well do what we to help protect them. I am so proud of the generosity of this group. There were hundreds of people who were involved in doing this.

Peters: THEY WERE PICKING UP SPEED, USING DOZENS OF 3-D PRINTERS ACROSS THE CITY TO PRODUCE THESE SHIELDS. THE WORK THAT STARTED ON CAMPUS WAS EXPANDING. INTO THE HOMES OF LUBBOCK BUSINESSES AND FAMILIES, INTO THE HEART OF A YOUNG BOY.

Wong: The best story... There was a middle school boy who had one 3d printer. And it takes a long time, it goes line by line, he could make 11 a week and every Tuesday we knew his mom would come by to drop off his 11 brims and he was playing his part. And to this day I tear up because there's this 11-year-old and he said 'what can I do to help? How can I not be isolated in my home? How can I give back?' What he could do was 11 brims, 1 at a time, he brough them to the honors college so we could make these face shields that would protect our nurses and doctors. The fact that this young boy said, 'I can help' makes me believe in our future. Makes me think that our next generation...they've got it in the bag.

(Music)

Peters: AS WE ALL FACED THE REALITY OF QUARANTINE, IN OUR HOMES OR APARTMENTS... 58 TEXAS TECH LAW STUDENTS WERE COMPLETING THEIR STUDY SESSIONS FROM HOTEL ROOMS, AIR BNBS, OR WITH FAMILY IN ALBUQUERQUE NEW MEXICO. THEY USED THE SAME SPACE FOR SLEEP, STUDY, MEALS, REST TIME, RECOVERY AND MORE AND MORE STUDYING. AND AFTER THOSE TWO WEEKS, THEY'D LEAVE FOR THE FIRST TIME TO SIT FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT EXAM OF THEIR LIVES. THERE WAS A 100% PASS RATE FOR STUDENTS WHO SAT FOR THIS NEW MEXICO BAR. ALL 58 OF THEM, AN EXCEPTIONAL FEAT. IT WAS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION FOR CASSIE AND SOFIA BUT THERE WAS MORE TO THE STORY FOR THEM. MORE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Christopher: It's really important to acknowledge that while we are proud and thrilled for our alums that passed the bar exam during the COVID pandemic, I also want to recognize immediately those who didn't get to pass it because they couldn't afford to sit for it.

Chapman: That's a good point that's made- is that we saw the difference this year in access and equity. That was hard for both Cassie and I.

Peters: COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO JUST COMPLETED 7 YEARS OF SCHOOL GO ON FOR WEEKS WITHOUT A JOB, WITHOUT THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES FINANCIALLY. AND THAT'S A HARD REALITY FOR CASSIE, SOFIA AND OTHERS.

Cassie: Can I pause you to be the Debbie downer of this conversation- we had 100% of our students who graduated in 2020 and sat for the New Mexico bar exam... 100% of them passed the New Mexico bar and we're thrilled about that. Part of that is because the students that didn't have the financial and emotional resources to take the exam deferred. And did not sit for the exam.

Peters: THERE WERE ROUGHLY A DOZEN STUDENTS WHO DEFERRED. SOME OF THESE STUDENTS OPTED OUT AND SAT IN FEBRUARY, OTHERS TOOK THE WHOLE COVID YEAR OFF BEFORE TAKING THE EXAM IN JULY OF 2021.

Christopher: Some may never sit for the exam.

Peters: CASSIE AND SOPHIA ARE IMPACTED BY THIS. IT'S THEIR BELIEF THAT MONEY DOESN'T MAKE A GOOD LAWYER, AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES SHOULDN'T PLAY A ROLE IN A STUDENT'S ABILITY TO BECOME ONE. HERE'S WHAT I MEAN....

Christopher: In any circumstance. In any year, the bar exam tests many skills that are not necessary to be a lawyer... and one of them being 'can you afford to not work for four months straight?' So, in many ways, the bar is a test of financial resources, more than what is between your ears and COVID amplified that.

Peters: I FELT THAT. AND SITTING DOWN WITH THESE WOMEN HEIGHTENED THE RESPECT I HAVE FOR ANY PERSON STUDYING LAW.

Chapman: I think for me- with a few I talked to. They told me 'I didn't think I was going to make it'... I was able to do this, and I made it and wait for the results.

Peters: CAN YOU IMAGINE? STUDYING FOR YEARS AND BEING SO CLOSE TO YOUR FUTURE BEING DETERMINED. THEN THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC NONE OF US COULD ARGUE WITH AND NONE OF US COULD CHANGE...CHANGES EVERYTHING FOR YOU.

Chapman: I'm trying to have the conversation that that's okay... That's okay for you.

Peters: What does that do for a young person's identity?

Christopher: Yeah! What a question...

Chapman: They beat themselves up- I'm not as good, I'm a shame.... we have more incoming first-year students, first generation students that don't have... it becomes an access and equity issue.

Cristopher: We are proud of their resilience.

Chapman: We are proud of their resilience!

Christopher: We are proud of what they've done to become practicing lawyers.

Peters: SOFIA AND CASSIE WERE MOVED BY THOSE STUDENTS, THE WAY THEY RESPONDED AND ADAPTED. AND WHAT THEY SAW FROM STUDENTS WHO TOOK THE EXAM WAS POWERFUL TOO.

Christopher: A lot of law graduates who passed the bar exam during the pandemic have become vocal advocates to abolish the stupid thing and there shouldn't be a bar exam to enter the profession. And I've really been enjoying it, it's called diploma privilege and I've really been enjoying the diploma privilege advocacy we're seeing from a lot of 2020 graduates.

Peters: MANY STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN THE SINGLE THING THAT THREATENED TO BREAK THEM AND FOUND SOMETHING IN THEMSELVES. SOMETHING THAT MADE THEM BETTER TO CREATE A BETTER FUTURE FOR OTHERS. NEXT TIME ON FEARLESS..

(Music)

Peters: FEARLESS IS PRODUCED BY THE TEXAS TECH OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING. IT'S HOSTED BY ME, TAYLOR PETERS, WITH SPECIAL HELP FROM ALLISON HIRTH. FEARLESS IS A TEXAS TECH PRODUCTION – FROM HERE, IT'S POSSIBLE.

Peters: HEY, IT'S TAYLOR. THANKS FOR LISTENING TO FEARLESS... DON'T FORGET TO LIKE, REVIEW AND SUBSCRIBE WHEREVER YOU GET YOUR PODCASTS.