

Coming to us from “The Live Music Capital of the World” and home of the NALSC 2018 Annual Conference – Austin, Texas – is Kathryn Holt Richardson (“Kathy”). Kathy founded HR Legal Search (HR stands for “Holt Richardson”) over 15 years ago and the firm consistently has been named one of the top legal search firms in Texas by *Texas Lawyer* since 2011. While Kathy is a new addition to our Board of Directors, she has been a member of NALSC since 2015 and a regular speaker at NALSC events and a contributor to the organization’s efforts.

Although Kathy lived in Texas most of her adult life, her upbringing as an “Army Brat” shaped her world view as she lived in Germany, Virginia, and Indiana in early childhood. While the scenery and circumstances may have changed from place-to-place, there was one constant that followed Kathy to each destination: her love of books. Kathy was an avid reader starting at age three, and still is, considering it her favorite escape. One of Kathy’s favorite books is *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera – it reminds her that meaning and mourning are intertwined, yet it is our birthright to feel joy and a lightness of being.

Kathy’s family ultimately settled on the Jersey Shore when her Dad was stationed in Bayonne. Upon arriving there, Kathy and her sister integrated their elementary school. After graduating high school in New Jersey, Kathy moved to Washington, DC to attend American University. Given her international exposure at a young age and her resulting affinity for our diverse world at-large, Kathy majored in international affairs at AU and studied in Sevilla, Spain for a year (with all of her coursework taught in Spanish). While she initially set out to become a diplomat, a foreshadowing of her professional destiny came early in her undergraduate career when she worked at AU’s career center. It was in her role as an assistant career counselor that Kathy was tasked with helping graduate students find work abroad. While she pursued the job because of the international aspect, she soon came to love the job because it helped her discover what she was put on this earth to do: support others in pursuing fulfilling careers.

Upon completing undergrad, Kathy lived in Senegal for several months before looking to build upon her experience at AU’s career center by pursuing a graduate degree in career counseling. However, caught between this desire and her Mom’s encouragement for her to pursue a more practical law degree, it was indeed a fortune cookie that sealed Kathy’s fate. Out to a Chinese dinner with her mother and discussing which way to turn at this crossroad, Kathy’s fortune cookie at the end of the meal read, “You would make a good lawyer.” With that, Kathy’s next three years came into focus.

Now moving to Austin – sight unseen, mind you, as she was eager to leave the cold of the Northeast – and beginning her legal studies at the University of Texas, Kathy immediately realized that legal practice was not for her. She soon pivoted her focus back to career counseling but now was looking to apply this passion to lawyers. Upon graduating with her Juris Doctor from UT, Kathy was awarded a two-year fellowship back in Washington, DC with the National Association of Public Interest Law (now Equal Justice Works). Among her many roles in this capacity was organizing the country’s largest career fair for public interest minded students. While in DC, Kathy also earned a certificate in diversity training from the National Multi-Cultural Institute and traveled to law schools across the country conducting diversity trainings and facilitating retreats to support public interest minded law students.

Upon completing this fellowship, Kathy returned to Austin and

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soon was tapped to head the career services office at UT. By staying true to her passion and adapting to her evolving circumstances along the way, Kathy landed her dream job while still in her 20s! In this role as Assistant Dean for Career Services, Kathy prided herself on counseling thousands of law students and lawyers pursuing not only traditional career paths but non-traditional ones, as well.

After six years at UT, Kathy was recruited by Major, Hagen & Africa (now Major, Lindsay & Africa) to co-found their Austin office. Kathy served as Managing Director at MLA and headed the Texas Associate Recruiting Practice Group. In this role, she observed MLA co-founder and fellow UT grad Bob Major in action and had the opportunity to work with UT Law alumni Lauren Hagen and Marty Africa. From these and other generous mentors, Kathy adopted the following core belief that continues to guide her career: “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

In 2006, Kathy founded HR Legal Search, still one of the few Black woman owned legal search firms in the country. Based in Austin, the firm is national in scope with a varied practice placing groups and partners across the country, select associates, and in-house lawyers at every level including General Counsel. The firm has a niche in diversity recruiting, with a record of success placing attorneys of color.

In a legal recruiting career spanning almost two decades, Kathy understands that lawyers are highly invested in their profession and, as such, deserve to love their work and where they do it. To quote Kathy, “It is an honor to facilitate such transformative transactions.”

For those new to the recruiting profession, Kathy wishes she learned to spot red flags earlier and run, not walk, away from flaky candidates and clients. Kathy also had to adapt to the roller coaster of highs and lows that recruiters encounter and practice being more mindful and present. To that end, Kathy currently is studying to become a certified

health and wellness coach. She has begun co-facilitating wellness retreats in Barbados for lawyers as well as Chief Diversity Officers and other diversity professionals as she knows that sometimes we need to slow down to catch up. Kathy is interested in the confluence of wellness and diversity in the workplace. It is her hope to impact our profession by reinforcing that happy lawyers are better lawyers and that diverse workplaces are more fulfilling and, therefore, more profitable.

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When Kathy is away from the office, she enjoys the outdoors and can go months without turning on her TV. She is an avid hiker and attempted summiting Kilimanjaro on two occasions despite her fear of heights. She also enjoys traveling to remote places “off the grid” and has made her way to the Yukon, the Amazon, the Salt Flats in Bolivia, and the backroads of the Texas Hill Country and West Texas. Kathy has two sons in college and has been blessed to travel and hike with them, with a standing trip to Taos, New Mexico every year. Kathy also adopted a pandemic puppy, an Australian Sheppard named Rambo, and an older schnoodle, Nala. She is in two book clubs in Austin and enjoys collecting art, biking, and yoga. Recruiting lawyers is a tough yet fulfilling business and she believes that work-life balance is imperative to be both happy *and* successful and to maintain equanimity through the ups and downs of the rollercoaster ride. Her dream job was to support others find their dream job and she knows she is blessed to be living that dream.

Welcome to the Board, Kathy! Look forward to seeing you in-person again soon!

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