“My first few years of practice have been a rollercoaster, full of turbulence and unexpected twists and turns. Yet, I have found immense joy in helping clients gain their freedom and watching them enjoy their newfound freedom.”

Lolia Y. Fernandez, a 2017 graduate of FSU College of Law, shared these words during the first community vigil and vigil walk to commemorate and honor the names of victims of racial violence. Fernandez, a first-year law student and a member of the Florida Black Law Students Association, described the vigil as a moment of reflection and healing for the community.

The event was organized by the Law School’s Black Law Students Association, with leadership from student government, student regent, and student Bar directors, including a former director of the Florida Bar. The vigil was held in honor of the names of victims of racial violence, recognizing the impact of racism and systemic inequality on our society.

Fernandez emphasized the importance of continuing the conversation and addressing the systemic issues that contribute to racial violence. “We must work together to create a more just society for all,” she said.

Other speakers at the event included 3L Shante Carter, who serves as president of the Asante African American Bar Association; and 3L Walker Smith, IV, president of Lawyers for Communal Engagement. They each shared their thoughts on the importance of working towards a more just and equitable society.

The event also featured speakers from the FSU College of Law, including 3L Kessinger and 3L Radley. Kessinger, who serves as the president of the Bar Association, said, “This is a moment to come together and support one another.”

The vigil was streamed online, allowing those who were unable to attend in person to participate. Despite the social distancing guidelines, the event was still a meaningful moment for the community, bringing together individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives to honor those whose names were lost.

The event was made possible through the support of the FSU College of Law’s Bar Exam Fund, which helps graduating students who are facing unexpected financial challenges. The fund was established to support students as they navigate the challenges of making a transition from law school to the practice of law.

The event was a powerful reminder of the importance of continuing the conversation on racial justice and the need for systemic change to address the issues that contribute to racial violence. It was a moment of reflection and healing for the community, and a call to action for everyone to work towards creating a more just and equitable society. Through the support of the FSU College of Law’s Bar Exam Fund, students like Fernandez are able to continue their legal education and work towards making positive changes in their communities.