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## In Memory of Melissa Britt Lewis

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## IN MEMORY OF MELISSA BRITT LEWIS

HEATHER BAXTER

Melissa Britt Lewis may have been the most unlikely candidate ever for Nova Law Review's Editor in Chief. A rebellious teenager, Melissa dropped out of high school at the age of 18. She was never one to give up, though, so she quickly obtained her GED and started college classes. Melissa worked full-time through college, so it took her close to ten years to obtain her undergraduate degree. But that didn't mean she was finished. Most people would say, "Enough!" Not Melissa. She wanted to be a lawyer. So, three more years of school awaited her at NSU Shepard Broad Law Center.

This is when I met Melissa. We were both junior staff members on the Nova Law Review. I didn't know all about her background yet, but I knew that she was a non-traditional student and quite a bit older than my classmates and me. She quickly became the mother hen of our bunch, cooking for us and providing us with stories from the real world. To say Melissa flourished at NSU would be an understatement. She may have waited a while to get there, but Melissa had found her calling in life and it showed. She excelled academically, and became the Editor in Chief of the Nova Law Review. Her leadership skills, coupled with her real life experience, made Melissa an excellent Editor in Chief. I can personally attest to this, as I served as Melissa's second in charge that year.

In addition to her Law Review service, Melissa found something else at NSU that would change her life. Melissa signed up for Trial Advocacy under adjunct professor Scott Rothstein. Scott says Melissa impressed him beyond measure from the first assignment, and he quickly hired her as a law clerk in his office (then only two attorneys and a paralegal). Melissa stayed with Scott as his firm grew and she became a preeminent litigator. She was a tireless advocate for her clients, working to right the wrongs they had endured in their employment. Her efforts eventually led her to be named partner at Rothstein, Rosenfeldt and Adler, an achievement of which she and her family were extremely proud.

Though she was a hardworking attorney, Melissa's dedication to her family was unrivaled. Melissa's three nieces were the apples of her eye. I can remember the way she looked when she would tell me of her many trips to Disney World with the girls. Not having children of her own, Melissa felt privileged to be such a big part of her nieces' lives, and they loved their Aunt 'Lissa fiercely.

Mirroring the effort she put in for her clients and her family, Melissa also believed in giving back to her community. She was a member of Leadership Broward and the Broward County Human Rights Board. Because of her

involvement with Leadership Broward, she was working on a memorial dedicated to victims of violent crime when, ironically, she herself was murdered on March 7, 2008. It is this tragedy that prompted the Nova Law Review to dedicate this issue to Victims' Rights, in memory of Melissa.

I feel lucky to have called Melissa a friend. Though it has been a year since her death, I know I speak for countless others when I say we miss her every day. It would make her proud to know that she has inspired this issue of the Nova Law Review, and that, even in death, her memory lives on to give a voice to those who have lost so much.