

FALL 2021

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UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO LAW SCHOOL

WELCOMING DEAN
LOLITA BUCKNER INNISS



Colorado **Law**
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER



My mission here at Colorado Law is to help to sustain and enhance difference with distinction: change that enlightens and advances the legal enterprise and the world.

—Dean Lolita Buckner Inniss

Message from the Dean

I am thrilled to join and to lead this community of thinkers and doers. This community includes outstanding students, staff members, faculty members, and thousands of Colorado Law graduates who now hold positions throughout the region, state, country, and world. We are many, and we are mighty.

As happy as I am to be the new dean of Colorado Law, I am also deeply thoughtful about the ways in which, looking at my childhood, my role here is somewhat improbable. I grew up in a poor and working-class family. Though I loved my family of origin, I yearned for more than my immediate circumstances offered. I was consequently the first person in my family to obtain a regular high school diploma, the first to attend college, and the first to attend graduate school. I am almost tempted to begin a discussion of my early years by quoting comedian Steve Martin's opening line in the film *The Jerk*: "I was born a poor Black child." I offer this one-liner neither to evoke sympathy nor to elicit admiration for my own modern-day Horatio Alger story. Rather, it is my opening salvo in a personal and professional genealogy of how I got to law school teaching, and now law school leadership. I offer this joke in order to help you to know who I am—I am that same child, and I am a change-maker.

Why is it that we laugh at jokes like Steve Martin's comedic one-liner? It is because such jokes rely upon the presumed static nature and truth of visual images and employ the creative and transformative power of language to reshape those images. Martin's one-liner is a masterpiece of change-making humor, a humor that assails hegemony, thwarts expectations, and thereby produces an irony so trenchant that it induces laughter instead of tears. In my case, the humor exists because there is a potent counter-irony operating—I was born a poor Black child. And my background shapes my worldview in a number of ways. Perhaps the most important outcome of my early life experience is how it has caused me to seek communities where access, excellence, persistence, and innovation are central, intersecting values. Colorado Law is such a place. These values give structure and meaning to all that we do.

Looking back over this past school year we see an especially vivid illustration of the importance of persistence and innovation. We have undergone many months of social isolation enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of us have lost loved ones and friends during this period. Some have suffered economic or health-based challenges. At the same time that the COVID-19 crisis has taken place we have also seen social movements unfold in ways that have not been seen since the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Our students, staff, and faculty have met these difficulties with generosity, optimism, and resilience. We have all come through a lot, and we are changed. Changed people change things, not simply for the sake of difference, but often for the better. My mission here at Colorado Law is to help to sustain and enhance difference with distinction: change that enlightens and advances the legal enterprise and the world.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lolita Buckner Inniss".

Lolita Buckner Inniss, Dean and Provost's Professor of Law

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On the cover:

Dean Lolita Buckner Inniss in Denver's Five Points neighborhood. Inniss' paternal grandmother was born and spent much of her childhood in Five Points, which was known at the time as "Harlem of the West."



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Welcome to the Class of 2024

3,749	31%	3.61	164	25
APPLICATIONS	COLORADO RESIDENTS	CUMULATIVE GPA (MEDIAN)	LSAT SCORE (MEDIAN)	AVERAGE AGE
172	113	32%	36	23
ENROLLED FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS	UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS REPRESENTED	STUDENTS OF COLOR	STATES (INCLUDING D.C.)	INCOMING LL.M. AND MASTER OF STUDIES IN LAW STUDENTS



Statistics as of August 20, 2021

Inaugural Preorientation Program Readies Students for Law School



careers,” said Professor **Amy Griffin**, who led a team to implement the program.

“There are many reasons why a student might be concerned about the transition to law school,” said **Fernando Guzman**, assistant dean for diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence. “Some students have never met a lawyer, while others may be the first in their family to attend college. Some have learning differences, and some have been out of school for several years.” The program included opportunities to talk with upper-level law students and attend lunches with members of the Colorado Law faculty and legal community.

“When we admit you to Colorado Law, we know you are capable of succeeding here,” said **Kristine Jackson**, assistant dean for admissions and financial aid. “Wolf Week is meant to foster our students’ belief in themselves.”

This August, about 50 incoming 1Ls participated in Colorado Law’s first-ever Wolf Week, an optional preorientation program designed to help transition students to the study of law. With the goal of demystifying some of the unique aspects of law school, the program addressed such frequently asked questions as: “What is the Socratic method?” “How do you read cases?” “Why do some professors pose so many hypotheticals?” And “What is a law school ‘outline?’” Classes during Wolf Week

also introduced students to fundamental legal analysis skills and effective study techniques. Professor **Pierre Schlag** taught several classes that were run like traditional first-year courses, but with an additional component—the opportunity to deconstruct the experience with Schlag.

“We hope to give incoming students—especially those who might find the transition to law school more challenging—a sense of confidence as they begin their law school

Doug Spencer, Election Law Scholar, Joins Faculty

Doug Spencer, an election law scholar whose research addresses the role of prejudice and racial attitudes in Voting Rights Act litigation, joined the University of Colorado Law School faculty as an associate professor this fall.

“I am thrilled to be joining the Colorado Law community at such an exciting time. There is a lot of enthusiasm about our new dean, **Lolita Buckner Inniss**, and a growing anticipation for meeting together again in person,” Spencer said. “I am also excited for the opportunity to study election law in a state that champions voting rights for all and that has led the nation in accessible and free elections for many years.”

Spencer’s research examines the empirical implications of campaign finance regulations and the many ways in which election rules and political campaigns contribute to growing inequality in the U.S. Following the July 1 U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholding two contentious voting laws in Arizona, Spencer’s research was cited by the dissenting justices, who were pessimistic about the implications of the opinion on minority voting rights.

Spencer joined Colorado Law in fall 2020 as a visiting distinguished faculty fellow with the Byron R. White Center for the Study of American Constitutional Law, where he led student initiatives and public outreach focused

on the promotion of democracy and rule of law. One of these projects, Democracy in Action, engaged hundreds of CU Boulder students and faculty in voter outreach efforts ahead of the November 2020 presidential election.

Spencer previously served as professor of law and public policy at the University of Connecticut, and has taught as a visiting professor at Yale Law School (2020) and at the University of Chicago’s Harris School of Public Policy (2018–19). He has also worked as an expert witness in voting rights and campaign finance cases. He runs the website All About Redistricting, which tracks and reports on the map-drawing process and redistricting-related litigation in all 50 states.

Before his career in teaching, Spencer held positions as a law clerk for the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights in San Francisco, an election monitor in Thailand for the Asian Network for Free Elections, and researcher for the Pew Center on the States’ Military and Overseas Voting Reform Project.

Spencer holds a PhD in jurisprudence and social policy from the University of California, Berkeley; a JD from Berkeley Law; and a Master of Public Policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley. He graduated magna cum laude from Columbia University in 2004 with a bachelor’s degree in philosophy.



Doug Spencer



Colorado Law Launches Civil Rights and Racial Justice Certificate

As part of the University of Colorado Law School's Anti-Racism and Representation Initiative, the law school recently announced the launch of a certificate program focused on civil rights and racial justice. The Civil Rights and Racial Justice Certificate will directly prepare students for a career in civil rights and racial justice law, focus their education on issues in race and the law, and seek to address structural racism by studying its causes and effects. With support of former Dean **S. James Anaya**, the certificate program was developed by the law school's Public Service Committee, led by Clinical Professor **Colene Robinson**, in consultation with faculty teaching courses related to the certificate and the Council on Racial Justice & Equity student organization.

In addition to exposing students to a higher level of experience and understanding of racial

justice issues, the certificate will help students and graduates stand out in the competitive field of civil rights law.

The certificate is an opportunity for students to continue conversations and learnings that have begun in the classroom and law school events, including those held by the White Center and the Race and the Law lecture series.

"The certificate will be a great asset to put on résumés and mention during interviews. Students will be able to mention that they are working on a civil rights and racial justice certificate when applying for their positions, which will show employers that the student is committed to promoting equity for all people—which is a phenomenal trait to have no matter what area of law a student would like to enter," said **Essence Duncan** ('23), who serves as a leading member of the Council for Racial Justice & Equity.

A broad and diverse range of courses, including Civil Rights, American Indian Law, Employment Discrimination, and Immigration Law, are among those eligible for certificate credit. Associate Professor **Scott Skinner-Thompson** agreed to serve as the initial faculty advisor for the program.

With this addition, Colorado Law now offers 10 certificates in American Indian law; energy, environmental, and natural resources law and policy; entrepreneurial law; health law and policy; international law; juvenile and family law; and an interdisciplinary graduate certificate program in environment, policy, and society.

Stacey Abrams Shares Lessons in Life and Law with Class of 2021

By Nicole Mueksch

After navigating their final year of law school amid a pandemic and a social justice movement, 200 graduates from Colorado Law celebrated their accomplishments in a virtual ceremony on May 8.

The class, comprising Juris Doctor, Legum Magister, and Master of Studies in Law graduates, and their families heard from political leader, voting rights activist and keynote speaker Stacey Abrams, a former member of the Georgia House of Representatives (2007–17) and the first Black woman to deliver a response to the State of the Union Address (2019).

Abrams talked about the power of belonging in society and her perspective on life, law, and a lawyer's call to action. Despite growing up in poverty, Abrams was highly motivated in school and was named valedictorian in high school. She was invited to a celebration for valedictorians at the Georgia governor's mansion, but was initially denied entry by a guard at the door after he witnessed her get off a city bus with her parents. Her father and mother—who placed a high value on education and were both working toward master's degrees in divinity at the time—stood up for their daughter until they were admitted to the event.

"I remember nothing from that day except a man standing in front of the most powerful place in all of Georgia and telling me I don't belong," she said.

She charged Colorado Law graduates with protecting that societal sense of belonging as they move through their careers.

"Belonging is a word we use a lot, and it is a hard thing to hold on to—particularly when you enter spaces that don't expect you, that don't want you, that are willing to reject you at the drop of a hat," she said. "As lawyers, you will be called upon to enforce the notion of belonging. It is your responsibility to not let the laws divide us from society."

Abrams' three edicts

To see that responsibility through, Abrams provided three edicts to live by:

Own your ambition. Abrams challenged Colorado Law graduates to dream big and believe in their power to enact change—and to do so in a way that isn't cocky, but rather confident and is used to help others realize their full potential.

"So often we are taught to sublimate our needs or desires or to edit what we want," she said. "I need confident leaders

who are stepping into the world and believe it is their right to demand better, it is their right to deserve better."

Embrace your fears. Fear is all around us, and many times we are told to suppress our fears, but Abrams contests that notion. "One cannot be brave if one does not acknowledge fear is real," she said. "When you deny it from yourself, you find yourself denying it in others, and then you lose the capacity for empathy."

"It is your responsibility to not let the laws divide us from society."

Stacey Abrams

Her call to action was not to live in fear, but to instead recognize the fear or challenge, embrace it, and let the acknowledgement of fear be used as preparation to problem-solve and overcome even the toughest obstacles.

Be prepared to fail. Abrams acknowledged this third charge might sound like a terrible piece of advice on commencement day, but argues it is the most important

takeaway as graduates move forward with their lives and careers.

She used the personal example of her loss in the race for governor in 2019 as a landmark failure in her life—but she used that failure to learn, grow, and move on to establish her organization called Fair Fight, which advocates for equal voting rights in America.

"Failure not only teaches us how to survive loss," she said, "it teaches us how to be better people: how to be better friends, how to be better allies, how to be better family members."

Abrams said having ambition, embracing fear, and preparing for failure will equip the graduates of Colorado Law to make progress that leads to justice. Abrams reminded graduates, a class that has come together during a time of social turmoil, about their belonging to one another, and that their lives will not be defined by their title but by what they do with their opportunity.

"(You are a class who) have committed themselves to building a world of justice. If you build a world of justice, you will never fail unless you permanently forget that you are in this together."



Kristelia García: Where intellectual property meets economics

By Samantha Swantek ('21)

Associate Professor Kristelia García teaches courses in copyright, property, and trademark, and serves as director of the intellectual property initiative with Colorado Law’s Silicon Flatirons Center for Law, Technology, and Entrepreneurship. Her work focuses on competition and economics and how those fields intersect with intellectual property. In this Faculty Focus, she discusses contracting, licensing, and the role economics plays in shaping technology law and policy.

In March 2020, you published “Super-Statutory Contracting” in the *Washington Law Review*. You argue against conventional wisdom that strict property rules prompt intellectual property (IP) owners to contract-seek for more flexible liability terms. Rather, you argue that, in the face of statutory liability, IP owners are contracting for *more* protection instead of less—which you term as “super-statutory contracting.” Can you expand on this theory? Why do you think parties to property contracts are not behaving in the way the law anticipates?

Ultimately, my favored explanation for this unexpected behavior boils down to efficiency. Many copyrights are subject to a statutory, or compulsory, license. These one-size-fits-all licenses necessarily overserve and underserve different parties. Where we have inefficiency, we have the opportunity to improve. That’s what these private parties are doing, and in many ways this is a good thing. Of course, these parties are circumventing the statutory licenses in their own self-interest, without regard to the greater good. Viewed cumulatively, then, super-statutory contracting can undermine public law values, resulting in holdup, adverse selection, and misrepresentation. It may even exacerbate anticompetitive concerns. For these reasons, I don’t advocate unbridled private ordering here. Rather, I hope to highlight the grossly underappreciated role of “perceived control”—something the statutory license negates—as a bargaining lever in the licensing enterprise.

Also in March of last year, you published “Monetizing Infringement” in the *UC Davis*

***Law Review*. This paper describes the need to move toward a positive theory of copyright that recognizes the role private parties have in shaping technology law and policy, especially in *encouraging* copyright infringement. Why do you think this is? Should private parties be given this much breadth to influence important policy?**

Infringement of copyright is a bad thing, right? Not necessarily, I argue. In fact, sometimes rights holders actually encourage infringement for a very simple reason: They benefit from it. The article identifies three broad categories of infringement that tend to serve certain rights holders: (i) profitable infringement, in which, for example, a video game developer can encourage piracy of a video game in order to sell upgrades within the game to a broader audience; (ii) remedial infringement, in which encouraging infringement is the lesser evil; and (iii) promotional infringement, in which, for example, a recording artist encourages fans to post so-called “fan vids” in order to increase excitement around a new release.

While I largely approve of this phenomenon, there are some areas of concern that I discuss in the paper. Several of them stem from the unregulated nature of the endeavor and the propensity for inaccurate norm-setting and uneven application. A video game developer, for example, may allow piracy of one game and not another, to the detriment of users who misread the signal. Indeed, after years of video game developers’ allowing piracy in hopes of selling upgrades, a startup developer who can’t afford piracy and/or whose games don’t feature upgrades may be hard pressed to push against this unilateral policymaking by larger, more established brands.

Before joining Colorado Law, you worked for Universal Music Group and oversaw the release of Taylor Swift’s album *Red*. Recently, Swift has begun rerecording many of her famous hits to manage the control, production, and distribution of her work. You recently spoke on a panel at the Santa Clara University School of Law on innovations in technology and access,



addressing Swift’s recent moves. What type of questions do her actions raise about copyrights and licensing? Why do you think she has chosen to regain control now, and how do you think it will affect the music industry as a whole?

Swift’s rerecording of her masters highlights a common fact that the general public is largely unaware of: The creator of a work is often not the owner of the copyright on that work. In this case, Swift is the recording artist for her first five albums, but the copyright on those sound recordings was held by her record label. This means that when those rights were sold, and then resold—ultimately ending up in the hands of a private equity fund—Swift was powerless to stop any of it.

This doesn’t mean, however, that she’s completely powerless. Given Swift’s popularity and fiercely loyal fan base—along with an unusually generous recording contract—she

was able to rerecord those albums, offering “Taylor’s Version” of the tracks to consumers, streaming platforms, and synch partners. So far, it looks like her gamble has paid off: *Fearless (Taylor’s Version)*—an album first recorded 12 years ago—hit No. 1 on the Billboard Top 200 earlier this year.

For better or for worse, I wouldn’t predict we’ll see lots of this kind of thing going forward. There are a couple of reasons for this: First, many recording contracts prohibit rerecordings. Second, recording an album is expensive; it may pay off for an artist like Swift—with the fan base and resources to pull it off—but it won’t make sense for the vast majority of artists. The more interesting question, I think, is whether we should reconsider the power dynamic between developing artists and established intermediaries.

You recently wrote about the concept of payola, or “pay-for-play,” which is

an undisclosed payment given for the promotion of music. In your article, “Pay-to-Playlist: The Commerce of Music Streaming,” co-written with Cardozo School of Law’s Christopher Buccafusco, you argue that streaming in a pay-for-play style causes no harm to consumers and may help independent artists reach a larger audience. Can you expand on this argument? Are there any circumstances in which you believe payola should be disclosed or regulated on a stricter scale?

This was such a fun and interesting project to work on! The impetus for research in this area came from reading a few articles in the popular press in which different parties expressed (or dismissed) concern about whether new programs like Spotify’s “Discovery Mode” (in which artists can get a coveted spot on a popular playlist in exchange for accepting a lower royalty) were akin to broadcast payola (where a DJ is paid to play a particular song

Kristelia García in her record-decorated office at Colorado Law.

on the radio) such that they, too, should be regulated. While agreeing that acceptance of less money is equivalent, for these intents and purposes, to paying money, my co-author and I ultimately reach the counterintuitive conclusion that payola in streaming music should not be regulated, at least in the case of payments to third parties. Reverse payola as practiced by platforms is a different beast, and an area we reserve for further inquiry.

To be clear, we’d say the same of traditional broadcast payola. Historically, the justifications for regulating payola were (i) that it harmed consumers, and (ii) that it harmed competition. We find neither justification convincing. Instead, we describe a political and social context in the 1950s and 1960s that used these “harms” as a cover for run-of-the-mill racism. The growth in popularity of rock-’n’-roll—or “Black music,” as it was called at the time—unsettled and upset the established, white songwriters and recording artists of the era. Pay-for-play was one way for traditionally marginalized artists to get a foot in the door of an industry that was otherwise closed to them. Indeed, the consent decree that ASCAP still operates under today was originally put in place to prevent them from colluding with radio stations to prohibit the play of so-called “Black records.”

In this way, payola actually served as a point of access for traditionally excluded artists. We think the same can be said in the streaming context. Superstar artists on major record labels have both the resources and the connections to get their songs on coveted playlists without having to resort to pay-for-play. Independent artists without major record deals or sufficient resources do not. For them, payola serves as a means of access to crucial distribution outlets, and its regulation, we argue, could reduce the diversity of musical offerings.

Interestingly, payola is not and never has been illegal. Rather, payola regulation merely requires disclosure of payola by the party who accepts it. Disclosure is effective in minimizing payola because artists don’t want to be seen as having paid for their popularity instead of earning it on intrinsic merit (a romantic, if laughable, concept). For this reason, requiring disclosure of streaming payola could at least partially foreclose a valuable access point for independent artists. We believe that the nature of social media influencers as “tastemakers,” and their inherent concern with authenticity, largely curbs possible abuses in this area, thereby eliminating any call for regulatory intervention in this area.

A Historic Moment

Introducing Colorado Law's 17th Dean: Lolita Buckner Inniss

By Samantha Swantek ('21)

Lolita Buckner Inniss has joined the Colorado Law family. Dean Inniss is a demonstrated advocate for social justice and researches at the intersection of race, gender, and law. Before coming to Colorado Law, she served as senior associate dean for academic affairs and professor of law at Southern Methodist University (SMU) Dedman School of Law. At SMU, she was a University Distinguished Professor, an honor reserved for SMU faculty members who demonstrate the highest levels of academic achievement. She was also a Robert G. Storey Distinguished Faculty Fellow. Inniss previously held the Hamilton College Elihu Root Peace Fund Visiting Professorship in Women's Studies, a distinguished visiting chair, and was also a fellow of the New York University-Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique Memory Project in Paris. A highly regarded scholar with a prominent national and international voice in her fields, Inniss is an elected member of the American Law Institute, and is the United States Special Rapporteur to the International Academy of Comparative Law on the topic of contemporary slavery.

Inniss earned her AB from Princeton University, where she majored in romance languages and literature, and her JD from UCLA School of Law,

"I'm looking so much forward to continuing the wonderful trajectory we're on. I hope that I am able to take us even further."

Dean Inniss

“I grew up with the idea that people in Colorado were always creating and building new things. And that’s something that I still see today.”

where she was an editor of the *National Black Law Journal*. She holds an LLM with distinction and a PhD in law from Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, in Canada. Her book, *The Princeton Fugitive Slave: The Trials of James Collins Johnson*, was published in 2020, and her forthcoming book, *Talking About Black Lives Matter and #Metoo*, will be released in 2023. She has taught subjects ranging from property and criminal law to comparative racism and immigration law.

Inniss was born in Los Angeles and is a multi-generational Californian on her mother’s side. Yet, moving to Colorado is something of a homecoming for her, as her paternal grandmother, great-grandparents, and their parents hail from the state. Inniss’ great-great-grandfather ventured to Colorado after serving in the U.S. Civil War in the 116th Colored Infantry. He fought in the Appomattox Campaign when the Confederate Army surrendered. Her paternal grandmother was born in Denver’s thriving Five Points neighborhood.

“I grew up listening to my grandmother and her siblings talk about their lives and their parents’ lives in Colorado,” she said. “When you hear about African Americans that lived at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, especially those that lived out West, you get a vision of people who are very hardy, intrepid, and who faced enormous challenges but at the same time were in the midst of an incredibly vibrant and growing community.”

Inniss recalls stories of Colorado as a vivacious, robust place. “I heard about amazing entrepreneurs and businesses that existed when my family walked down the street,” she said. “I heard about how so many African Americans came to Denver and Colorado and found success.” Despite difficulty, her ancestors relished the opportunity to be immersed in development. “I grew up with the idea that people in Colorado were always creating and building new things,” Inniss said. “And that’s something that I still see today.”

This same philosophy is evident at Colorado Law and was a major draw for her. “I felt that it would be a great fit for me philosophically,” she said. “Colorado Law describes itself as a Western institution with a national and international outlook, and I thought, ‘That’s me!’” Colorado Law’s focus on Western-specific issues, such as water rights and other aspects of the environment, was also hugely exciting to her. “The research surrounding Western water rights is impactful,” Inniss said. “Westerners are independent but at the same time collaborative, friendly, and quite engaged.”

Inniss feels not only a regional loyalty to the West but has an international outlook, in alignment with Colorado Law’s unique mission. In law school, Inniss had an interest in international law due to her background in romance languages. After graduation, she became involved in immigration law while heading her own practice. “At the time, there was a huge upsurge in Haitian political asylum seekers,” she said. Because Inniss speaks French and a small amount of Haitian Creole, other lawyers would send

Haitian clients, including asylees, her way. “I developed a clientele I never envisioned having, and from that I was invited to join an immigration clinic full time as an instructor working with Haitian political asylum seekers.” It was at Seton Hall Law School’s Immigration Clinic that Inniss began teaching. “From there, I ended up doing podium work, and the rest is history.”

Growing up, Inniss had a variety of interests. “If you asked me what I wanted to do, I would have said a doctor, lawyer, or French teacher,” she said. However, Inniss was often picked to play the judicial role in history projects throughout her schooling, which led her to develop the sense that lawyering may be something she could excel at. “I came from a pretty working-class family who was fairly poor when I was young, so there was a push to do something that would earn money,” she said. “When I needed to choose between a PhD in French or law school, I looked at what new French teachers were making and decided I couldn’t afford to do that.”

Inniss has a passion for working with students, but also enjoys the administrative aspects of her deanship. “If you had asked me at the beginning of my teaching career, I wouldn’t have been interested in administration,” she said. “I’m not a person who was out to become a dean, some dean, any dean. The mission and reputation of Colorado drew me here, as well as the faculty’s engagement in world-class work.” As Inniss became more senior in her profession, she was drawn to law school leadership, recognizing the difference it makes in the lives of students, faculty, and staff members. “I headed the academic standards committee at one of my faculties and saw that I was able to shape the rules that would govern students’ futures,” she said. “That experience, and others like it, have caused me to want to improve the law school environments where I’ve worked.” That is what led her to pursue the deanship at Colorado Law.

“As I looked back over my law school career, I thought about my own experiences to determine the type of dean I wanted to be,” she said. As a longtime scholar, Inniss has interacted with many administrators. “I’ve had many deans,” she said. “I’ve been on different faculties and have examples of great deans, and that’s what I want to emulate.”

Inniss thought long and hard before applying for the Colorado deanship, as she enjoyed her previous position at SMU Law. However, the reputation of the Colorado Law faculty made her willing to apply even if not selected for the deanship. Inniss was delighted to immerse herself with the faculty throughout the interview process. “Many of the faculty struck me as tremendous individuals, and I have huge respect and admiration for them,” she said. “If I hadn’t gotten the job, I was still so happy to meet and talk with members of the community who I knew I would connect with in the future.”

Before her transition into educational work, Inniss began her career as a prosecutor in New Jersey. “I worked during the drug wars in the ’90s, and so much of what I prosecuted was involving those issues,” she said.

“It was a great opportunity to litigate and do justice.” Inniss focused much of her work on ensuring that those charged with minor crimes were not sentenced to excessive jail time. “I was able to help make sure some people didn’t get prosecuted or to try to have those prosecutions declined,” she said. “It was important that I did that work.” Later she worked in small private practices doing real estate law.

A focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion has always been central to Inniss’ pedagogy. She plans to continue the effort former Dean **S. James Anaya** began with the law school’s Anti-Racism and Representation Initiative in 2020. “One of the reasons this position was attractive was because Dean Anaya has been very intentional about developing these programs,” she said. “I certainly intend to continue and enhance these initiatives as much as I can.”

Inniss also intends to uphold these values in the day-to-day details of her job. “I represent something for the students. Not just the students of color. Not just the women,” she said. “I bring to life values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and I believe that’s part of the real value of me having this opportunity.” Inniss feels that her identity is also an important part of what she brings to the deanship. “Diversity, equity, and inclusion are also about excellence,” she said. “I don’t want people to just say, ‘She’s a Black woman dean.’ I want them to say, ‘She’s a great dean and she’s a Black woman.’”

Inniss believes a DEI focus is necessary to strong lawyering but is a reality often unacknowledged in law school. “We at law schools sometimes think that you only need to focus on the cases and learn the rules of law and you’ll be great,” she said. “But knowledge of culture, custom, religion, or other factors of social identity, is equally as important. We as leaders and faculty members would be remiss if we sent our students out without a solid understanding of the diverse world in which we live and the importance of equity and inclusion.”

According to the new dean, “Excellence is not an add-on or a happenstance.” Rather, “excellence is infused in diversity, equity, and inclusion. I want people to understand that excellence comes in all forms,” she said. In discussions of diversity, she believes that too often the focus is on difficulties and challenges. “This is absolutely the case, but there are also triumphs and wins,” she said. “This is something our students must understand to be successful, both as lawyers and members of society.”

Inniss is the first African American dean of the law school. “It means a lot to me personally and from a familial perspective,” she said. At the finalist stage, she spoke to her 90-year-old paternal uncle about the process. He told her that this type of job wouldn’t have been possible to even imagine many years ago for their Colorado family members. “I understand this is historic,” she said, “but it wasn’t until I spoke with my uncle that I paused to think more about what it means for African American people in general and for those in Colorado whose families have historically lived here.”

“On the one hand, I’m happy to have this chance to represent,” she said. “On the other hand, I am just a senior law professor who came into this role seeking to do her very best.” In fact, she describes herself as two people at once. “I’m this tremendously representative person who is very conscious of that representation in all that she does,” she said. “But I’m also a plain and simple person who, at this point in her career, is much like any other person serving as a law school dean.” Inniss plans to bring both sides together in her day-to-day. “When you’re on the ground every day being pragmatic about leadership, you do what any leader would do,” she said. “Part of my leadership makeup happens to be my role as an African American woman.”

Inniss was selected from a pool of four finalists, all of whom are women. “It is certainly evidence that there are more opportunities for women,” she said. “There have always been excellent male deans, but for many years it was unusual for there to be a female dean or dean candidate.” Colorado Law’s last female dean was Betsy Levin from 1981 to 1987. During Inniss’ JD education, she had the experience of studying under Dean Susan Westerberg Prager at UCLA Law. “Coming up as a JD student and having a female dean in place showed me it was possible, but I also knew that Dean Prager was one of very few,” she said.

On being one of four female finalists, Inniss noted, “I like to think that the fact that all four finalists were women is because the four of us were the very best candidates, and I’d like to think that’s where we are in history.” However, she recognizes that many still define greatness on a gendered or racial basis. While her identity as a woman is important to her, it does not solely define her. “I am very much tied to my identity as an African American woman, and I am also a Westerner, a Californian, and a United Statesian, among many other things,” she said. “However, at the end of it all, I’m still just me.”

For now, Inniss is focusing on settling into both her new role and new home. “We live in nearby Superior, and I’m truly impressed by many of my neighbors,” she said. “I almost feel as if I need to build in an extra hour in my day just to talk to them because they’re so full of information and ideas on how we can do things.” Having lived all over the country, Inniss has found few places where the community is “as engaged, collaborative, and vision-focused” as it is in Colorado. “This is what my grandmother and her siblings were talking about,” she said. “People in Colorado just make things happen.”

The Colorado Law community has been equally impressive. “I’ve been delighted to meet the students, staff, alumni, and faculty I’ve encountered so far,” she said. “It’s an exceptional place.”

Simply put, Inniss is thrilled to be here. “I’m looking so much forward to continuing the wonderful trajectory we’re on,” she said. “I hope that I am able to take us even further.”

“I don’t want people to just say, ‘She’s a Black woman dean.’ I want them to say, ‘She’s a great dean and she’s a Black woman.’”



“The Women of Color Collective is committed to standing at the front lines of fighting and dismantling patriarchy, sexism, and oppressive forces that harm marginalized peoples.”

Verónica González ('23),
Taylor Schad ('21), Sasha Strong ('21),
and Natasha Viteri ('21)

Alumnae of Color Share Advice for Future Generations

As told to members of Colorado Law’s Women of Color Collective

By Verónica González ('23), Taylor Schad ('21), Sasha Strong ('21), and Natasha Viteri ('21)

The Women of Color Collective (WoCC) is a student group at the University of Colorado Law School that is dedicated to supporting and promoting those who identify as women of color. Through supportive networking, mentorship opportunities, and collective initiatives, WoCC seeks to enrich the educational and social experience at the law school.

WoCC is a place that hears, discusses, and addresses the concerns of women of color, with a goal of fostering conversation and uplifting the student body at Colorado Law. The group’s highest priority is to create a fully inclusive and welcoming environment to support every woman and member of the community. WoCC is committed to standing at the front lines of fighting and dismantling patriarchy, sexism, and oppressive forces that harm marginalized peoples. Women of color, nonbinary people of color, and gender diverse people of color stand together—in unity and strength—as influential trailblazers in the legal arena.

The WoCC came to fruition after a group of four women of color finished their first semester at Colorado Law in fall 2018. **Taylor Schad** ('21), **Sasha Strong** ('21), **Natasha Viteri** ('21), and **Charissa Wood** ('21) were sitting around a kitchen table when they recognized that the law school was missing a space for the intersection between being a woman and a person of color. Because women of color face different challenges in law school, the group wanted to ensure every woman of color had support at Colorado Law. Putting their vision into action was both challenging and exciting, and it ultimately resulted in the formation of WoCC.

WoCC continues to be a work in progress. The organization is always looking for ways to partner with attorneys and employers in the greater Denver area for opportunities to share with its members.

Last summer, we sought to bolster the legal community of women of color by highlighting

local women of color attorneys. By giving a forum for women of color in the law to tell their stories, their wisdom can live on and inform generations to come.

To accomplish this passing of wisdom within the community, we selected four Colorado Law alumnae of color to interview:

- Verónica González ('23) interviewed **Hiwot Covell** ('09).
- Sasha Strong interviewed **Lisa Shellenberger** ('11).
- Natasha Viteri interviewed **Gillian Asque** ('17).
- Taylor Schad interviewed **Edyael Casaperalta** ('18).

Interviews have been edited and condensed.

Verónica González ('23) interviews Hiwot Covell ('09)

Hiwot Covell (she/her/hers), who graduated from the University of Colorado Law School in 2009, is an Ethiopian American chemical engineer turned attorney and former shareholder at Sheridan Ross P.C.



Tell me about yourself. Where do you come from, and what was your journey to law school?

I was born in Denver and raised in Littleton, Colorado. I received my degree in chemical engineering from CU Boulder in 2001. Then I worked as an engineer for about five years before I went to law school.

Engineering was great. I got to work on a lot of challenging problems. I find that to be similar to solving problems as a lawyer. I came to the law as a second career with the intention of doing intellectual property law. I liked the idea of helping inventors protect their ideas, and I liked that IP law combined my engineering background with the law.

So, you came to your 1L year with IP law in mind. How did you decide on IP law?

I knew that in order to do patent prosecution, you needed to have an engineering and science background. That was one reason I

gravitated towards it. It felt like a good fit with my background. One thing that I wish I would have done in law school is the criminal law clinic, or something outside of IP. Maybe it would have exposed me to something that would have expanded or changed my career direction.

That's what I'm trying to do with law school, get exposed.

One thing I wouldn't do is pick your classes based on what you think you'll see on the bar. My bar prep classes prepared me for the bar. So, unless a topic is of interest to you, you don't need to take Secure Transactions, or . . .

Mergers and Acquisitions?

Yes! Take the things that are interesting to you. It's such a unique time to learn.

Could you talk about your favorite parts of law school?

My favorite part of law school was by far the people I met. I loved my class. They are an exceptional group of human beings, and they were kind to each other. They all had this drive to do well, but they didn't push someone else down to get ahead. If anything, I thought our class felt that we could all do well together. I honestly have taken that into my practice as a lawyer, too. I'm so proud of their accomplishments now, whether it be a classmate making partner, starting their own law firm, working in the public sector, or moving on from a career in the legal practice to pursue other interests. It's an impressive class, and I'm happy to be a part of it!

That's amazing! It's so great to hear.

Yes. And I hope that your class will be able to pick up the 1L social experience that you didn't have last year. You've have had this unique pandemic year, and you know what it was to go through this difficult time. I think your class has the ability to capitalize on doing well.

Hopefully, we'll get to know each other a lot better, too. I'm looking forward to my second year! During your career, you have had the opportunity to litigate and participate in oral arguments. Can you talk about that experience?

I didn't get to present the argument, but I helped prepare it. The preparation is what's important for the oral arguments. When we did those

arguments, we found out who the judges were on the same morning, and so we were trying to prep based on the multiple-judge panels we would get. It's pretty cool to do that research and then have to bring it together last minute!

You also work in patent law. What kinds of fields do you work in when it comes to inventions?

My background is in chemical engineering, so I'll mainly work on chemical and mechanical patents.

I would like to shift gears a bit. What is it like to be a partner at a firm as a woman of color?

There are great things about it, and there are challenges and places to improve. The experience is complex.

It probably warrants at least an hour of conversation.

At least. I do have a question for you. What does it mean to somebody who is in law school when you see someone who is a woman partner?

It is inspiring. I really admire the women who I've seen as partner. I know I'm early in my career, but I can't imagine myself becoming a partner at a firm. The fact that it's being done is assuring that we deserve a spot at the top.

It is interesting. Why do you think it's hard to imagine yourself being partner at a firm?

Well, I have experienced a lot of criticism throughout my life. I'm still trying to build the skills, and I know I'm a smart person, but I don't have that confidence that, one, a firm would like me enough to make me partner, and two, that I would have the audacity and the skill to become partner. But I think a lot of that is subconscious and an assumption that I've made. It's probably not true.

I would like to get confidence in the forefront of your mind instead of the doubt. Because if not you, then who? Why wouldn't you be as deserving as the next person? You are. It takes work for anybody, but I have all the confidence that you'll get there. You just have to build a little bit of confidence at a time.

That’s absolutely true. Finally, what is one piece of advice you could give yourself at the beginning of your journey?

In law school, have fun and live it up. It’s such a unique time to learn about areas where you may want to practice. It’s also a great time to build a network of people who will hopefully cheer you on for the rest of your career. And as far as your first few years of practicing, I would say, be the sponge. Absorb as much as you can and learn about what you’d like to incorporate into your practice, and what you don’t want to incorporate in your practice. Then don’t forget to turn around and help those who are following in your footsteps.



Verónica González (she/her/hers) is an Ecuadorian American 2L at Colorado Law who plans to become a litigator, and eventually, policymaker, in the civil rights and education sectors.

Sasha Strong (’21) interviews Lisa Shellenberger (’11)

Lisa Shellenberger (she/her/hers) is a 2011 alumna of the University of Colorado Law School and is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



How do you identify culturally?

I’m a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and so I identify as part Anglo-Saxon, part Native American.

Tell us about your work.

I am a managing partner at Setter Roche Smith & Shellenberger LLP. Prior to that, I was a partner at Smith & Shellenberger LLC, and I had been with that firm since I graduated law school, except that I did clerk for Justice (Nancy) Rice at the Colorado Supreme Court for a bit.

How did you decide on law as a career?

It’s a very interesting story, one that I am actually quite passionate about. My sister always wanted to have children. She’s six years older than I am, and she got married quite young. I had observed her over my college years, where I was really trying to determine my career path, struggle with having children. She had multiple stillborns and a number of other lost pregnancies, and also failed in vitro fertilization. After the IVF took, and she conceived those pregnancies, those pregnancies were lost as well. She is a schoolteacher and her husband is a firefighter, so they don’t have substantial income. I observed them turn to the option of private adoption, and it not be a viable option because of the associated costs, both through attorney’s fees and private adoption agency fees. Simultaneously, I’m being raised in Indian Country in Oklahoma. I’m seeing the lower socioeconomic status that most tribal members and families are a part of coming out of the reservation, and how that actually resulted in a direct inability for my sister to achieve the family that she wanted. I decided, “You know what, I would really love to be a lawyer to do work for my tribe, do tribal law to bolster socioeconomic status and improve tribal sovereignty in Indian Country, and also do family law, either within district courts or tribal courts, or both.” And 10 years later, here I sit practicing family law and juvenile law, doing adoptions for people, including pro bono adoptions, and working for tribes. And to note, I handled the adoption for my sister.

Who is or was an important role model or mentor in your life?

Judge Kathy Delgado was a really big mentor in my life, as well as Judge (Donna) Schmalberger. In the earlier years of my career, I felt they were two judicial officers who were really standing up for, and demanding increased compliance with, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in their courtrooms. They

not only talked the talk, but walked the walk by insisting on changes being developed and implemented within their judicial districts, and particularly within the courtrooms that they led. And now, years later, I am serving as a high-level consultant to the state court judiciary in Colorado on ICWA implementation, and also providing consultant services to tribal courts to improve their judiciary. I really appreciate the leadership they have provided through their own actions when I was a younger attorney because it gave me the awareness and confidence that I can do the same, but maybe in a slightly different manner.

Can you tell me about one of your favorite moments in practicing law?

The day I stood in a courtroom and was able to get a decree of adoption for my sister with my entire family there in the courtroom to be a part of it.

There’s truly no experience in my life that has come more full circle than my legal career. My legal essay for my application to be admitted into CU Law was about my sister and living on the reservation, the socioeconomic impact of coming from that place and that type of environment on her and my family, and how I wanted to help, both in terms of increasing socioeconomic opportunities for families on a reservation and adoptions. My essay ended with, “One day, I want to be able to assist my sister with getting an adoption.” At the time that I wrote it, I don’t know that I thought it would happen, and then it did. That day, about seven years after I got my law degree, I stood in that courtroom with my entire family and we welcomed a little boy into our family.

Are there any challenges to being a woman of color in the law?

I have an interesting perspective on this. Outwardly facing, I have some features that are consistent with being Native American, but they aren’t my predominant characteristics and features. I’m an eighth Choctaw, I have a little bit more Cherokee in me, but my tribal membership is one-eighth. But I was raised on a reservation. That is where I come from, and that’s who I am. Oftentimes, when I’m working with tribal clients, I feel like, since they don’t see so much of those features in me visually, that they don’t have as much trust in the experience and background that I have coming from Indian Country, as they might trust in someone who looks a little different. So, I can understand and appreciate that a lot of people of color who outwardly project those physical

characteristics more than I do might experience difficulties in different ways, but I find that the people for whom I’m working in this niche field aren’t as eager to trust because I don’t look as much like them as they might anticipate.

What are some words of wisdom for young aspiring lawyers?

Recognize you’re not going to always know what you’re doing, and you might not always feel like you have the subject matter fully under control, but embrace the situation as an opportunity to learn and get better as each of those circumstances arise. So, in other words, instead of feeling hesitation or fear associated with a case, really take advantage of learning how to do it and how to do it well. But for that experience, you’ll never learn and get better. If you have the opportunity to handle something that you might feel is beyond your skill set, take that opportunity to improve your skill set, meet the needs of the client by going above and beyond utilizing the resources and mentors available so that you can do a good job, and the next time the opportunity is presented to you, you will have had the experience to handle that type of matter without any type of trepidation.

Could you explain more about the intersection between tribal law, juvenile law, and family law?

This intersection is a very important part of my practice, and it is also a niche area of law that, but for me practicing juvenile law, family law, and tribal law separately, I wouldn’t have been able to experience. The application of ICWA has become a very prevalent part of my practice, both in terms of actual litigation and representation of clients in cases involving ICWA, but also in my advisory role as a private consultant and volunteer (training judges and magistrates through the Colorado State Court Administrator’s Office). If I had to identify a true niche area of my practice that’s very prevalent, it would be that intersection between family law, juvenile law, and tribal law. That’s my specialty and something I’m very proud of.



Sasha Strong (she/her/hers) is a 2021 alumna of the University of Colorado Law School and a member of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians.

Natasha Viteri (’21) interviews Gillian Asque (’17)

Gillian Asque (she/her/hers) graduated from the University of Colorado Law School in 2017 and received a certificate in Energy, Environmental, and Natural Resources Law and Policy. While at CU, Gillian was elected class president from 2014 to 2017 and participated in the Colorado Natural Resources, Energy, and Environmental Law Review as a production editor.



Where do you currently work?

I am an attorney for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Region V, which is based out of Chicago. I was able to land a fellowship with the same office right out of law school. Through my fellowship, I was able to be converted to a permanent attorney for Region 5.

How did you decide on a career in law?

I’m the first attorney in my family, so there was a passion to reach that milestone. And in terms of law versus other areas and professions, I have always been attracted to how law is present in almost every part of our daily lives—the contracts we make, where we live, and how we work with folks in different fields—so I knew that law could be a door to a lot of different pathways and interests.

Can you tell me one of your favorite stories from law school?

I think my favorite story would have to be when I was cold called in Professor **(Fred) Bloom’s** Civil Procedure class. What was funny about

that was we had a meet-and-greet with some professors a week before classes started, and someone had told me to introduce myself because he’s a great professor. Little did I know that for that year, everyone who talked to him and had a conversation, they were the first people he called on. So my friend Eric was called on the first day, and we all expected Professor Bloom to jump around throughout the entire class, but he called on Eric for the entire hour. And then the next day, Professor Bloom said, “Gillian, tell me about jurisprudence,” or something like that, and it was just really funny for me looking back on it because I just didn’t know that was going to be his style for the entire year. I thought it was just maybe a fluke that he kept calling on Eric, and here I was in the hot seat.

Can you talk about an important role model that you had or a mentor that helped shape your career or helped guide you in some way?

What I found was really helpful throughout law school was to get the help from the many mentors that come through. One of the first alumni that comes to my mind is **Lee Zarzecki** (’11). I actually met him through diversity weekend at CU Law. I shared my interest in environmental law, which is what he practiced in, and throughout law school he was a very great mentor and person I could rely on and reach out to for all the questions under the sun, be it what classes I should take, how I should navigate interviews, and how to better prepare myself for the bar exam.

What kind of challenges have you faced as a woman of color in law?

One of the biggest challenges is navigating a field where there are so few women of color, if not people of color, as is the case in the environmental law field. So, there’s just several instances where I am the only person of color, even more so the only woman of color, in the room at the negotiating table. So that’s a constant struggle in the sense of having to make sure that I represent myself in a way that is authentic to me without having to sacrifice my identity to fit into what might appear as the norm in the room.

Can you tell me about some of the most rewarding aspects of your job? What do you look forward to the most?

I would say there are two things I look forward to the most. First, seeing certain results in my

career. I’ve been fortunate enough to work on matters where I can see a direct line into how my settlement will positively impact the community. As you know, our client is the environment and the public health, so that’s always our goal and our guide post. So, it’s always fulfilling to me when I go through my day and think about how this is going to impact this community or this certain environment, and seeing it happen and sometimes in short order, which is great. The second thing that might be somewhat odd is I look forward to learning something new pretty much every day. My clients, while technically are the environment and public health, on a day-to-day, I’m working with inspectors, the engineers, the chemists who go out and find the problems that exist today, that we are charged with addressing. And so through that I have learned all sorts of the cool things about certain facilities, new areas of the Clean Air Act that I might not have seen before, and that’s always fulfilling and something I look forward to.

What words of wisdom would you give to students thinking about law school, and students that are graduating from law school and about to go into their careers?

For aspiring lawyers, my advice would be to take your time. Lots of folks might think that the perfect path to law school is to graduate from college and take the LSAT and then go straight to law school, when in actuality, you can be any age, and in your undergrad have any type of major. And so that should hopefully allow someone the chance to explore other avenues if they want, so that way when they go to law school, they know it’s what they want to do. At the time, it may be financially, maybe mentally where they’re ready for it, and hopefully, with that in mind, it might be a lot more of an enjoyable process because it’s not as streamlined or intense. So, I guess I would pass it along: It’s OK if it happens five years after, 10 years after, whatever. So don’t feel forced to go as soon as you graduate.

For those going into their careers, I would say as stressful as law school might have been, everyone who you graduated with is someone you should always try to keep in your corner. Even though it may seem like a very vast field of attorneys, it’s really quite small. So you might be surprised by how much you will continue to interact with your classmates, with your mentors, especially if you have a type of niche profession, such as environmental law. So, if you ever thought you were going to be on your

own, my advice would be to throw that out the window and embrace everyone you’ve gone through this huge undertaking with because they’re right there with you, and I’m sure there are going to be a lot of ways that you can benefit each other in the future.



Natasha Viteri (she/her/ella) graduated from Colorado Law in May 2021. This fall, she is a Gallogly Foundation Fellow at Towards Justice, where she is working on workplace safety and employment issues affecting the Latino community in Denver.

Taylor Schad ('21) interviews Edyael Casaperalta ('18)

Edyael Casaperalta (she/her/ella) is a 2018 graduate of Colorado Law. In March 2021, she was named senior policy advisor for the Rural Utilities Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. She is from Elsa, Texas.



How do you identify culturally?

I am a Mexican-Peruvian Latina of Indigenous descent.

Tell us about your work at the USDA.

I advise the Rural Utility Service (RUS) on policies to extend broadband service on rural and tribal lands. RUS finances water, electricity, and broadband infrastructure projects in rural communities. RUS started in 1935 as the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) with the mission to extend electricity across farms in the U.S. At that time, most of the farms did not have electricity. Electricity providers were not serving farms and rural areas because it did not make economic sense for their profit model. So, the government stepped in by creating the REA, which provided funding for farmers to build their own electric cooperatives. We are at a similar inflection point today with broadband. Millions of people across the U.S. still do not have internet service, and the communities left to be connected are in the most rural and poor areas. RUS supports projects and partnerships with those communities to get connected. I also work closely with the Office of Tribal Relations to create good partnerships with tribal governments to support their efforts to build broadband access. I am honored to get to do this work, and it’s really fun!

How did you decide on law as a career?

Before law school, I was a policy analyst and advocate on rural broadband issues. I worked at nonprofits interested in expanding internet access in rural communities, advocating for federal policies to close the digital divide. That work included collaborating with Native-led organizations leading tribal broadband issues. I wanted to understand how telecommunications law impacted everyday people in rural communities and help amplify the voices in those communities in interactions with policymakers. I saw that a lot of my colleagues were attorneys, and I realized that if I wanted to become a more influential advocate, I needed to go to law school. I chose Colorado Law because of its great programs in telecom and American Indian law, and its awesome immigration law clinic. Those were the three areas of expertise that I wanted around me.

What was your law school experience like?

When I decided to go to law school, I wanted time to think and learn about the intersection of telecommunications law and rural, Native, immigrant, and poor communities, and that’s exactly what I got. I had access to classes that were precisely about federal Indian law, telecom law, and immigration law. I was a part of the *Colorado Technology Law Journal*,

where I wrote about broadband policy in the U.S. in comparison to other countries. I felt like I got exactly what I was hoping for: an opportunity to learn the foundations of law and the space to think about these intersections, and to meet professors and a network that supported those ideas. I loved law school.

Also, after law school, I had the incredible opportunity to join Colorado Law’s American Indian Law Program as a fellow. I worked with the top faculty in the field, began learning about how to build good partnerships with tribal government representatives and Indigenous leaders, and was encouraged to think and write about telecommunications access and the rights of Indigenous peoples—all experiences integral to my work today.

Who is an important role model or mentor?

There are so many people who have advised and supported me on this journey. It’s actually really hard to choose only one person. And that’s because, in part, we need all the support we can get. When you’re trying to do intersectional work, you need a whole community of mentors to help you understand what’s ahead.

From my advocacy days, two people stand out: Harold Feld and Jessica Gonzalez. Both are respected attorneys in the telecom public interest world. They supported my journey in becoming a telecom attorney who would support rural and tribal communities. Back in the day, Jessica was the only Latina telecom attorney that I knew, in a sea of predominantly white male attorneys. She has been a role model for me and opened doors that completely changed my world.

During law school I got to meet a lot of incredible people. One mentor that I have

stayed close to is my former boss, Ken Fellman, president and partner at Kissinger & Fellman in Denver. He specializes in broadband and telecommunications law. During my 2L year, the Career Development Office staff encouraged me to apply to clerk in his firm. I think my experience in rural broadband and interning at the FCC helped me, and I was lucky to work for him that year. I learned so much. I frequently seek his advice because he is a great attorney and mentor.

At USDA, I’m meeting a lot of incredible people. One of them is Heather Dawn Thompson, the director of the Office of Tribal Relations. I’m blown away by the caliber of her work and how she works with a variety of teams to address complex issues in a way that seeks and recognizes the contributions of every member. Her commitment to Indigenous peoples and tribal sovereignty inspires me.

Are there any challenges to being a woman of color in the law that you’ve come across?

One of the challenges is not having a huge community in the legal sector. But our community is growing. Since I graduated there have been so many young, brilliant woman attorneys joining the telecom law ranks. Although we need more!

When we talk about telecommunications access in an equitable and just way, you need people from underserved communities to help us understand the challenges and opportunities. When we don’t have that diversity of voices at decision-making tables, we miss critical perspectives and end up with incomplete strategies. Now that we have more women of color joining telecom law, our understanding of the challenges that communities of color and low-income

communities face in accessing telecom services is fuller. We have more eyes, more experiences, and more ways to create solutions.

What words of wisdom do you have for aspiring lawyers?

Go toward the people that support you. As young attorneys, we need guidance, mentorship, and support systems. We need folk helping us understand where and how we can grow, and folk to open doors for us. So go toward the people that are your cheerleaders and will mention your name in rooms of opportunity. All the mentors that I mentioned have offered me that. Also, understand that we never do anything alone. We stand on the shoulders of incredible attorneys, leaders, and activists who have opened doors for all of us. We won’t get to the next stage individually, we get there as a community. So go toward the people and places that help you feel connected to community and supported in your journey.

Edyael’s statements are her own and not attributable to USDA.



Taylor Schad (she/her/hers) is a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribes and a recent graduate of Colorado Law, where she focused her studies in American Indian, international, and environmental law. She hopes to work with

government entities to strengthen tribal relations regarding treaty and natural resource rights.



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		New Jersey Institute for Social Justice		Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP	
BRONZE					
Anonymous		Colorado Trial Lawyers Association		Killmer, Lane & Newman, LLP	
Arnold & Porter		Dorsey & Whitney LLP		Native American Rights Fund	
The Buck Family Fund		The Gary ('70) and Regina Jackson family		Shoemaker Ghiselli & Schwartz LLC	
Burns, Figa & Will		Gebhardt Emerson Moodie Bonanno, LLC		University of Colorado, University Counsel	
Cheney Galluzzi & Howard, LLC		Hurth, Sisk, & Blakemore LLP		Vicente Sederberg LLP	
FRIENDS					
Anonymous in honor of Dean Anaya		Daniel A. Vigil ('82)		Marisa Hudson-Arney ('01) and Ryan Arney ('00)	
Colorado LGBT Bar Association		Judicial Arbiter Group, Inc.		Rathod I Mohamedbhai LLC	
Conscience Bay Company		Kissinger & Fellman, P.C.			

SAVE
—THE—
DATE

See you in 2022!
41st annual Alumni Awards Banquet
Thursday, March 10, 2022

To learn more about sponsorship opportunities, please email lawbanquet@colorado.edu.



Law Alumni Board

The members of the Law Alumni Board act as representatives of Colorado Law alumni and promote the best interests of the law school by stimulating interest in, building loyalty for, and increasing support for the law school in the community and among its alumni and students. The 2021–22 board chair is David Stark, and the chair-elect is Michael Carrigan.

- Desta Asfaw ('11)**, Holland & Hart LLP
- The Hon. Nikea T. Bland ('05)**, 2nd Judicial District
- Christopher Brock ('14)**, Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
- William “Bill” R. Buck ('83)**, Exxon Mobil Corporation Upstream (retired)
- Michael Carrigan (Chair-Elect) ('94)**, Holland & Hart LLP
- Marco Chayet ('97)**, Chayet & Danzo, LLC
- Amber Cordova ('02)**, T-Mobile
- Hiwot M. Covell (Immediate Past Chair) ('09)**, Colorado Attorney General's Office
- The Hon. Thomas R. French ('77)**, Judicial Arbiter Group
- Tim Galluzzi ('14)**, Cheney Galluzzi & Howard, LLC
- Stanley Garnett ('82)**, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP
- Velveta Golightly-Howell ('81)**, Sister-to-Sister: International Network of Professional African American Women, Inc.
- D. Jeffery Grimes ('89)**, Astex Pharmaceuticals
- Greg Hearing ('12)**, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP
- John V. Howard ('87)**, Bounds Green Mediation
- Aditi Kulkarni-Knight ('15)**, Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP
- Caitlin McHugh ('12)**, Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie LLP
- Kristin Moseley ('97)**, Porzak Browning & Bushong LLP
- Richard Murray ('07)**, Polsinelli
- Lisa Neal-Graves ('06)**, retired
- Linda S. Kato ('85)**, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8
- Gregory J. Ramos ('92)**, Sherman & Howard L.L.C.
- Siddhartha Rathod ('07)**, Rathod I Mohamedbhai LLC
- David W. Stark (Chair) ('73)**, Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP
- Beale Tejada ('12)**, Crane & Tejada, P.C.
- Keith Tooley ('86)**, Welborn Sullivan Meck & Tooley, P.C.
- Sarah Wallace ('99)**, Ballard Spahr LLP
- Andrea Wang ('01)**, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Colorado

Letter from the Law Alumni Board Chair David Stark ('73)

Colorado Law Alumni,

As the chair of the Law Alumni Board, I want to offer some thoughts on this time of transition and the need to redouble our efforts to maintain and enhance Colorado Law’s position as one of the premier law schools in the U.S.

This transition has many parts. I welcome our new dean, **Lolita Buckner Inniss**, who is an outstanding choice and an accomplished professor, lawyer, author, and leader poised to guide the law school to even greater accomplishments. I also congratulate outgoing Dean **James Anaya** on an outstanding five years at the helm of this great institution. His dedication to human rights, efforts to combat systemic racism, and passion for service to the students provide a solid foundation for the future of the law school. Other parts of the transition include the hopeful emergence from the pandemic, efforts to combat climate change, anti-racism initiatives, and protecting the right to vote for all. I realize this is a long list, which could be even longer as we assess our ever-changing world. So, what can you, as an individual, do to promote and support Colorado Law in these challenging times?

The Law Alumni Board (LAB) has some suggestions. But first, a few facts about the LAB. As you may know, the LAB is composed of 28 law alumni with members from the Front Range, the Western Slope, California, Texas, and Washington. It is a diverse group with graduates from 1973 to 2015. The LAB works closely with the dean and Colorado Law leadership on many issues. Recently, we welcomed three new members, **Christopher Brock** ('14), **Marco Chayet** ('97), and **Linda Kato** ('85), and applauded the service of three departing members, **Darla Daniel** ('01), **Mark Fogg** ('79), and **Marisa Hudson-Arney** ('01). We also thanked **Hiwot Covell** ('09) for her wisdom and leadership as chair in 2020–21.

Here are some of the many ways you can participate and support the law school: Mentor a law student; organize a class reunion at Homecoming; serve as an adjunct professor at the law school; speak at a class or school event; attend the Law Alumni Awards Banquet; attend our highly successful Colorado Law Talks, Race and the Law series, and Supreme Court Review; and, of course, give generously to the law school or one of its many scholarships.

All of us on the LAB want to remind you to save the dates for Homecoming & Reunion Weekend (Nov. 5–6), and the Law Alumni Awards Banquet next spring on March 10, 2022. We hope to see you soon. To learn about these and other ways you can get involved, please visit colorado.edu/law/alumni/get-involved. Or you can reach out to **Georgette Vigil**, senior director of alumni engagement and outreach, at georgette.vigil@colorado.edu. To learn more about giving, visit colorado.edu/law/donate, or contact **Peter Sanders**, assistant dean for advancement, at peter.sanders@colorado.edu. Finally, you can call or email me at david.stark@faegredrinker.com, 303-607-3753.

David Stark

CLASS ACTIONS

1969

The University of Colorado Board of Regents honored **Charles Sisk** ('69) with its Distinguished Service Award for his lifetime of public service and dedication to the state of Colorado. Sisk has served as deputy district attorney in Boulder, Boulder County public administrator, Louisville City Council member and mayor, and RTD board member and chair. He retired from public office in 2019.

1977

After 30 years on the bench, Denver District Court Judge **Morris B. Hoffman** ('77) retired effective May 1, 2021.

Colorado Springs Mayor **John Suthers** ('77) has been elected chairman of the board of directors of the Daniels Fund. Now valued at approximately \$1.6 billion, the Daniels Fund is a private charitable foundation dedicated to making life better for the people of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming through its grants program, scholarship program, and ethics initiative. Suthers has served on the Daniels Fund Board of Directors since May 2015.

1979

Terry Hart ('79) retired after decades of work in the county government of Pueblo, Colorado. During his tenure, he served as Pueblo County attorney, senior associate county attorney, and chief of staff for the district attorney. Most recently, he served two terms as county commissioner representing District 1. He has been involved with county governance since January 1981, when he became an assistant prosecutor in the Pueblo County prosecutor’s office.

1982

Stan Garnett ('82), a shareholder in Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP’s Denver office, joined the board of directors of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers. The academy is an elite group of trial lawyers representing both sides of the bar: plaintiffs’ and defendants’ counsel in civil

litigation, and prosecutors and defense lawyers in criminal cases. Garnett was elevated to the board as recognition of his work as the chair of the academy’s Latin American Task Force and to further strengthen its presence and relations with the legal community in the region.

1984

Neal Cohen ('84) has joined Sullivan Cohen LLC as a partner. The Boulder firm was established in 2020. Cohen has 36 years of experience trying complex commercial cases and has represented clients in a variety of areas of law, including employment, securities, intellectual property, renewable energy, trust and estates, and natural resources. His practice focuses on high-stakes litigation in state and federal district and appeals courts, as well as arbitration, throughout the U.S.

1985

Rett Nelson ('85) will retire after six years as regional counsel for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Region 5 office in Chicago, and after 37 years of government service. The EPA’s general counsel said that Nelson has been a pillar of EPA’s legal community, both in Region 5 and nationally, soundly advising agency officials on legal, policy, and management matters. **Gillian Asque** ('17) carries on the Buff tradition in the same office, something of a rarity in faraway Chicago. Asque’s



Sisk ('69)



Garnett ('82)



Cohen ('84)



Asque ('17) & Nelson ('85)



Submit a Class Action lawalumni@colorado.edu

Please send your submissions by **January 1** for inclusion in the next issue. If your contact information or communication preferences have changed, update them at colorado.edu/law/reconnect.



Rodriguez ('88)



Becker ('89)



Mackey ('91)



Catlin ('00)



Scott ('00)



Wolf ('01) and team

career with Region 5 started as an honors fellow in 2017 and continues today as assistant regional counsel. Tackling climate change and ending environmental injustice require the skill and talent of the next generation of legal advocates/counselors, and Nelson says that hiring great lawyers like Asque is one of his signature achievements.

1986

Hon. Don Quick ('86) was selected as chief judge for the 17th Judicial District. He was appointed to the district court bench in December 2014. Before that, Quick served Ken Salazar as the deputy attorney general for criminal justice and chief deputy attorney general, and then two terms as the elected district attorney in the 17th Judicial District. Quick has been married to Kerrie Quick ('86) for 33 years, and they have two grown sons.

1988

Regina Rodriguez ('88) was confirmed as U.S. district judge of the United States District Court for the District of Colorado. She was nominated by President Joe Biden in February. Rodriguez, a veteran litigator, previously was a partner at WilmerHale in Denver, where she specialized in corporate regulatory compliance.

1989

Douglas J. Becker ('89) received the James E. Bye Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tax Section of the Colorado Bar Association in 2020 in recognition of his distinguished career practicing tax law in the state, his contributions to legal education, and his service to the Tax Bar. Becker recently commenced a solo law practice under the name Becker PC, with offices on 17th Street in Denver. He continues to teach as an adjunct professor of the University of Denver Graduate Tax Program.

Margaret Vellar ('89) was appointed by Gov. Jared Polis to the bench of the Pueblo Combined Court. Vellar previously served as a chief deputy district attorney in the 4th Judicial District Attorney's Office, which serves Colorado Springs, among other cities.

1991

Katherine H.R. Mackey ('91) became a member at Ruegsegger Simons & Stern, LLC. She focuses her practice in litigation, with an emphasis in workers' compensation matters.

1994

Christine A. Pellizzari ('94) was appointed to the board of directors for Celsion Corp., a clinical-stage company focused on DNA-based immunotherapy and next-generation vaccines. Pellizzari is chief legal officer of Insmed Inc., a global biopharmaceutical

company dedicated to transforming the lives of patients with serious and rare diseases. She has more than 20 years of leadership experience in the global pharmaceutical industry.

2000

Jessica H. Catlin ('00) joined Boulder law firm Hurth, Sisk & Blakemore, LLP. A member of the firm's trusts and estates team, Catlin focuses her practice in estate planning, probate administration and litigation, trust litigation, civil litigation, appellate advocacy, and domestic relations.

The Biden-Harris administration appointed **Janea Scott** ('00) as counselor to the secretary at the U.S. Department of the Interior. Scott was most recently a commissioner and vice chair of the California Energy Commission. Scott also served as the vice chair of the Western Interconnection Regional Advisory Body and is a member of the Western Interstate Energy Board and the Department of Energy's Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technical Advisory Committee.

2001

Jason Dunn ('01), the former U.S. attorney for Colorado, rejoined Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP's litigation department in Denver as shareholder. Dunn will focus his practice in government investigations and state attorneys general and political law practices.

David Wolf (JD/MBA '01), CEO of BSW Wealth Partners, and his team celebrated when the *Denver Business Journal* named BSW the No. 1 Best Place to Work in the medium-sized company category. Other accolades for BSW include: No. 9 Best Place to Work in the USA (*Outside* magazine), No. 21 Best Place to Work for Financial Advisers in the USA (Investment News), and CNBC referenced BSW for "walking the talk" as a B Corp/sustainable business. BSW Wealth Partners also received the Changemakers Award of the Best For Colorado Awards for the highest B Corp impact assessment in Colorado. BSW is now the top-ranked B Corp in the investment advisor category in Colorado and the Mountain West region.

2003

Trisha K. Harris ('03) was named of counsel at White Bear Ankele Tanka & Waldron. She focuses her practice on the representation of special districts, homeowner associations, and developer clients with a specific emphasis on the formation and development of covenants and/or associations for developing communities.

David St. John-Larkin ('03) became managing partner of Perkins Coie LLP in the Denver office. He joined the firm in May 2013 and has served as a partner in the firm's intellectual property practice

and co-chair of the unmanned vehicle systems industry group. He focuses his practice on patent analysis and litigation matters involving software and complex computing systems.

2006

Nicki (Herbert) Cerasoli ('06) has joined Holland & Hart LLP as of counsel in its Denver office. Her practice will continue to focus on corporate law, commercial contracts, M&A, and emerging growth and venture capital.

Stan Doida ('06) and Trevor Crow have merged their law firms to form Doida Crow Legal, a preeminent mergers and acquisitions law firm that works to provide businesses with a complete range of corporate legal services.

Travis Litman ('06) was appointed acting chief of staff at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Litman has over a decade of experience at the FCC, including serving then-Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel's office as chief of staff and senior legal advisor.

Rita Sanzgiri ('06) became a member of the Colorado BioScience Association's board of directors. Sanzgiri, shareholder at Sheridan Ross P.C., is a registered patent attorney who helps her clients design, build, and maintain global patent portfolios to protect their innovations in the general areas of life-sciences, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology.

2007

Richard Murray ('07), a shareholder at Polsinelli P.C., was honored with the 2020 Richard Marden Davis Award. The award is presented to a Denver lawyer under the age of 40 who combines excellence as a lawyer with creative civic, cultural, educational, and charitable leadership. At Polsinelli, Murray focuses his practice on commercial and business disputes, as well as cases involving litigation issues.

2009

Jessie Polini ('09) joined the Denver office of the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, as a civil rights attorney, enforcing federal civil rights statutes and regulations in educational programs and activities. Polini also welcomed a healthy baby into the family and has already started training her in inner tube water polo to carry on the legacy of the Noxious Beasts (intramural champions 2009).

Alisha Taibo Coombe ('09) started a nonprofit, Colorado Children First, in February 2021, which provides access to child representation to those who do not qualify for free legal aid in child endangerment cases. Coombe also published a book, *Family Law Boot Camp*, in March 2021,

which helps pro se parties represent themselves in all aspects of a family law case.

2010

Chris Achatz ('10) was promoted to partner at Koenig, Oelsner, Taylor, Schoenfeld & Gaddis PC (KO Law Firm). Achatz's practice focuses on structuring and negotiating complex technology and data-related transactions, including data privacy and security matters.

Norma Plache ('10) joined Hutchinson Black and Cook LLC as of counsel. She brings over 10 years of experience working with high net worth individuals, entrepreneurs, and families in the areas of sophisticated estate, wealth transfer, and income tax and philanthropic planning.

Jeff Rezmovic ('10) joined the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as deputy chief of staff.

2011

Shirin Chahal ('11) received the Volunteer Attorney Impact Award from the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA). This award recognizes an outstanding attorney who has provided pro bono legal services to Colorado creatives and advanced CBCA's Colorado Attorneys for the Arts program. Chahal has transformed a lifelong passion for arts and music into a legal practice that supports the creative industries.

Daniel Cordalis ('11) was appointed deputy solicitor of water for the Bureau of Land Management. Cordalis formerly served as an attorney with Earthjustice and the Yurok Tribe. He has more than a decade of experience working on natural resource, complex water, and land management issues on behalf of tribal governments and conservation groups.

Erin O'Brien ('11) joined telehealth company Hims & Hers as regulatory counsel. O'Brien will focus on advising the company in the health care regulatory space.

James Silvestro ('11) became shareholder and director at Ireland Stapleton. Silvestro's practice focuses on land use, real estate, and business litigation matters.

2012

Brent Owen ('12) was elevated to partner at international law firm Squire Patton Boggs LLP. Owen handles complex commercial litigation, focusing on high-stake class actions and energy disputes.



Dunn ('01)



St. John-Larkin ('03)



Harris ('03)



Chahal ('11)



Cordalis ('11)



Silvestro ('11)



Katz ('13)



Dittman ('14)



Metcalf ('16)



Kovac ('17)



Loehr ('18)



Liphart ('18)

2013

Nora Katz ('13) was elected to partner at Waller Lansden Dortch & Davis, LLP. Katz represents health care providers, automakers, and manufacturers with critical immigration matters.

2014

Austin Chambers ('14) joined international law firm Dorsey & Whitney LLP as an associate in the firm's cybersecurity, privacy & social media practice in the Denver office. Chambers focuses his practice on domestic and international data privacy and security, software licensing, and general technology law. He is a Certified Information Privacy Professional, a designation given by the International Association of Privacy Professionals.

Brandon Dittman ('14) became a shareholder at Kissinger & Fellman P.C. He joined the firm in 2015, focusing on the areas of public utilities law, municipal law, and telecommunications law. He is also the general counsel for the Colorado Association of Municipal Utilities.

Breanne Johnson (Compton) ('14) rejoined Curray York & Associates LLC after working with a civil rights and immigration law firm in Seattle. She brings more than six years of experience with immigration law, including four years with Curray York & Associates LLC. Johnson initially joined the firm as a law clerk while attending the University of Colorado School of Law.

Courtney Shephard ('14) recently joined the energy & natural resources practice group at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP. Shephard will continue to specialize in public lands, energy, and water law.

2015

Evan Blonigen ('15) joined Spencer Fane LLP as of counsel in the firm's Denver office. Blonigen represents insurance carriers in complex commercial actions at both the trial and appellate levels.

2016

Caitlin Cronin Woodward ('16) joined Davis Graham & Stubbs as an associate in its finance and acquisitions department. Cronin Woodward's practice focuses on commercial transactions, primarily in the technology industry. She has experience drafting and negotiating commercial agreements, financing documents, licensing agreements, corporate organizational documents and trademark applications.

Nick Eaton ('16) joined the trial department of Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP as an associate.

Eaton focuses his practice on white-collar crime and commercial litigation. He previously clerked for the Hon. Nina Y. Wang of the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado, where he managed a caseload encompassing complex commercial litigation, constitutional and civil rights violations, and labor and employment disputes at all phases of litigation.

Stuart Knight ('16) joined Holland & Hart LLP as an associate in its newly launched cannabis industry group. Knight counsels clients operating in the cannabis industry on licensing, regulatory compliance, and enforcement matters.

Hunter Metcalf ('16) started a new job as corporate counsel at Wildfire Defense Systems Inc. He is second in command under the general counsel, heading the corporate organizational and contracting initiatives of the company. He oversees day-to-day legal needs, including work in compliance, employment, labor, real estate, and data privacy. He is also the primary manager of the newly created legal department with junior attorneys and paralegals.

2017

Adrienne Kovac ('17) started a new job as legal counsel at Guild Education, a high-growth startup that provides education and upskilling as a benefit to working adults, based in Denver.

The National LGBT Bar Association named **Jordan Blisk** ('18) to its 40 Best LGBTQ+ Lawyers Under 40. Blisk is the associate director of chapters at the American Constitution Society and the executive director of the Colorado Name Change Project. He is an active mentor in the LGBTQ+ community and has dedicated his career to developing and executing programming and initiatives to protect and expand equality for marginalized groups.

2018

Edyael Casaperalta ('18) was named senior policy advisor for the Rural Utilities Services agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Most recently, she served as ACI project manager for AMERIND, the only 100 percent tribally owned insurance provider in the U.S., where she supported the company's efforts to bring high-speed broadband to tribal nations, businesses, and communities.

Morgan Liphart ('18) published her first book of poetry. Titled *Barefoot and Running*, the book chronicles the healing that can be found in wild spaces and has been included on several bestselling lists since its debut last spring. Liphart balanced the publishing process with working full time as an in-house attorney at Lumen Technologies.

Rosemary Loehr ('18) began a clerkship with Judge Harris Hartz on the United States Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit in January 2021. Previously, Loehr completed a yearlong clerkship with the Hon. Nancy Moritz on the United States Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit.

Darian Mendez ('18) joined Holland & Hart LLP's IP transactions team as an associate. Mendez guides clients through a broad spectrum of complex transactions related to IT, software, and technology.

Erin C. Pierce ('18) joined the litigation practice group at Lyons Gaddis as an associate attorney. Pierce comes to the firm following her clerkship with the Hon. Thomas Mulvahill ('87) in the Boulder County District Court.

2019

Alison Gordon ('19) was elected to a three-year term on the board of directors of the Boulder County Bar Association. Gordon is an associate attorney in her second year of practice at the Polansky Law Firm. She practices criminal defense, with a focus on juvenile defense and cases involving mental health issues.

2021

David Willner ('21) has joined the board of directors of The Village Institute, a nonprofit organization that serves as a live/learn/work center for single-mother refugee families. As part of his role, Willner will help the organization shape its legal governance and financial management policies, as well as ensure that the nonprofit has adequate resources to advance its mission.



Mendez ('18)



Pierce ('18)



Gordon ('19)



Willner ('21)

In Memoriam

Robert Mac Bennett ('52)

Richard Paul Brady ('80)

Marc Rene Brosseau ('76)

James C. Bull ('68)

James E. Carpenter ('57)

Marilyn Joyce David ('82)

Jay Wilson Enyart ('71)

Robert G. Fredrickson ('57)

Thomas James Golden ('54)

Roger D. Hunt ('60)

Phyllis Ann Kaplan ('84)

Howard C. Klemme ('54)

James M. Lamme III ('73)

W.D. Milliken ('53)

Clarold F. Morgan ('68)

Robert Masao Oshima ('69)

C. Victor Quinn ('55)

Eric Paul Ruderman ('73)

Susan A. Stearns ('79)

Roger E. Stevens ('57)

Robert C. Wolf ('02)

Emily Calhoun, former faculty

Deaths reported Jan. 1–June 30, 2021.

Emily Calhoun

By Mimi Wesson

Emily Calhoun, who served on the Colorado Law faculty for 35 years, died March 27, 2021. A scholar of civil and human rights, Calhoun was a staff attorney with the Southern Regional Office of the American Civil Liberties Union before joining Colorado Law in 1978. Emily was my friend and colleague for more than 30 years, and her untimely death leaves me with the kind of sorrow that only the end of such a long arc of shared experience can produce. When she joined Colorado Law in 1978, she and I were the only women on the faculty. Having women faculty was new to many of our older male colleagues, and it must be said that the institution did not always offer her the kindest treatment. Emily



was, to use a phrase that has somehow lately become term of opprobrium, a social justice warrior. She had come to law teaching from an earlier career as a civil rights litigator, and she was not one to stand by silently when she perceived injustice.

Emily played an especially notable role in modifying the law school's policy toward hosting interviews conducted by prospective employers who discriminated against gay students, and her advocacy came at

some cost to her relationships with faculty colleagues who opposed any regulation of employers' practices. Those who speak out against injustice know, as Emily did, that many will not appreciate their contributions to the conversation. And yet institutions seem to delight in assigning the role of critic to some of their members—a move that permits the institution to boast of its receptivity to criticism, but also allows for the critic to be isolated or brushed off as a troublemaker. Emily worked in the office of the university president for some years early in her career at CU, and I remember one occasion when President Gordon Gee praised her at a large public function for being “the conscience of the university.” She smiled and accepted the

by Oxford University Press. She enjoyed the esteem of her students and the affection and respect of her friends on the faculty; she had particularly warm relationships with her research assistants. She was justifiably proud of her spirited mentorship of younger women faculty, her successful advocacy for faculty salary equity, and the Supreme Court's citation of her scholarship. In retirement she served as a faculty ombuds, using her training as a mediator. Her work was supported and encouraged by her partner and the love of her life, her husband Robert Kerr.

Emily's creativity was not confined to law-related work: She was a gifted watercolor artist and an award-winning poet. One of her poems, “Eye on the Sparrow,” seems to me to capture her fierce spirit, her appreciation of nature, and her love of life—a love inextricably linked to the undeniable awareness that all is not exactly as it should be:

*We are told that God
looks over all
creation seeing it is good
and we the centerpiece*

*While seas are rising,
lands once ice dissolve beneath the sun
and She is fretting: should She cut her losses
choose, this time, the sparrow.*

By Emily Calhoun, selected by Robert Kerr

Psalm 23, my rendering

thinking of Gerard Manley Hopkins

this — a song for walks in shadow-valleys
on a path marked out and meant for one —
a summing-song of mercies, all the goodness
all the days of life, in double-words,
this song — of green that will turn amber-awn,
of soft-fledged fields where I lie down to rest
beside the waters, still, as once they were
before a wind swift-swept across and brought
us dapple-dawn from night — a contrapuntal
spirit-song, a howl, sweet, that stands
against deep-drowning darkness, this — a song
for one who tarries at the verge, who dwells
forever in creation, in the word

Emily contributed greatly to the scholarship of civil rights, especially in her book *Losing Twice*, a capstone achievement published

Howard Klemme ('54)

By Jane Thompson, Wise Law Library

Howard Klemme ('54), age 90, died on February 19, 2021, in his hometown of Boulder. Klemme taught at Colorado Law for 27 years and was professor emeritus since 1988.

I met Professor Howard Klemme in the spring semester of 1987, shortly after I was hired as head of public services for the CU law library. At that time our library's legal treatises were shelved according to a classification system developed by Harvard. I have a brief memory of Howard stopping by my office then to say hello—and to discuss



the merits of the Harvard system versus the more prevalent Library of Congress system. Later, I learned that Howard spoke with authority: He had served as law librarian for CU Law School from 1956 to 1959. As I would come to appreciate over the years of our acquaintance, here was a person who placed a high value on the pursuit, organization, and application of legal knowledge.

In many respects Professor Klemme was a “dream” patron. He loved spending time in the law library, particularly the light-filled reading room in Fleming Law. Howard read widely in constitutional law, legal history, and philosophy, and he would send me notices of new titles (always prefacing his requests with: “*If you choose to purchase this book, may I see it?*”). Some of his favorite works were about the *Magna Carta* and the history of English Law, Justice Curtis's dissent in the Dred Scott case, Joseph Story's *Commentaries on the Constitution*, and biographies of Sir Edward Coke, John Marshall, James Madison, David Hume, and others. He invited our staff to retrieve library books from his faculty office whenever others needed them. And he expressed appreciation for the careful work of our technical services librarians.

Well into his 70s, Professor Klemme remained cheerful and looked younger than his contemporaries. He still worked in his emeritus office and labored over his unpublished manuscript, *Takings, Substantive Due Process, and the Regulatory Roles of Government*. In 2018 the law library launched its digital repository of faculty scholarship, and we uploaded the text of his *Colorado Law Review* article, “The Powers of Home Rule Cities in Colorado.” This exhaustively researched piece from 1964 remains in our top 10 downloads. I suspect that the article attracted a new readership among citizens and attorneys grappling with control of oil and gas development.

Most days that Howard visited the law library, he would stop by to say hello to me and to our Faculty Services Assistant Matt Zafiratos. On those visits Howard never failed to inquire as to the health and welfare of our families. During the seven years that I cared for my elderly mother in Colorado, Howard was solicitous and empathetic. His humanity was a quiet comfort to me.

A month prior to Professor Klemme's 90th birthday (March 18, 2020), I called Howard to see if he was amenable to a small law school party. He graciously declined the invitation for health reasons. He also confided that he had one library book—Oliver Wendell Holmes' *The Common Law*—that he hadn't wanted

to return. I suggested that the law library purchase his preferred edition of that classic as a birthday gift. Typical of Howard, he insisted that we buy a paperback copy so that he would feel less guilty about writing in the margins.

On the afternoon of March 12, 2020, the law school closed abruptly due to the pandemic. I loaded up my car and arrived at the entrance to his retirement facility. I had the Holmes book in hand, and three birthday cards filled with warm wishes from faculty and staff. Before I could enter, I was stopped by a gentleman who said I was not allowed inside due to



COVID-19 precautions. I left the gifts, but I never saw Howard again.

Looking back now, I feel grateful that the facility protected its treasured resident. I hope that Howard's final months were enlivened by some of the things he enjoyed most: his beloved family, classical music, good books . . . and conversations about the law.

Q&A with
Jordan Blisk ('18)

Hometown: Fort Wayne, Indiana

Professional title: Associate director of chapters, American Constitution Society; executive director and board chair, Colorado Name Change Project

Community involvement: President-elect, Colorado LGBT Bar Association; board member at-large, Minority Veterans of America

Lives in: Denver

In addition to your role with the American Constitution Society (ACS), you serve as executive director and board chair for the Colorado Name Change Project. How did you get involved with this organization, and what drives your passion for its work?

I legally transitioned in Indiana during the spring of 2015, right before starting my 1L year at CU Law. At each step of the way, I faced hurdles. Information was hard to find, the costs were astronomical, and I wasn't even afforded basic decency by the judge presiding over my name change hearing. I didn't want anyone else to have the experiences that I did, so my good friend Amanda Bauer ('17) and I started the CU Name Change Clinic at CU Law in 2016. We saw a chance to use our position and privilege as law students to do some real, tangible good in the world, and it turned out to be my favorite thing about law school.

Research shows that about 49% of trans people don't have a single form of legal identification with the right name on it, and 67% don't have a single ID with the right gender marker on it. And when trans people don't have proper ID, their risk for negative outcomes, such as harassment, denial of services, or outright violence, absolutely skyrockets. The two biggest obstacles that trans people face in obtaining corrected IDs are a lack of financial resources and a lack of access to legal resources, and those are two things that, as a lawyer, I feel well-positioned to help my community with.

Around the same time that we established the clinic, Emma Shinn founded what eventually became the Colorado Name Change Project. When she returned to active-duty military service in 2019, I took over her role as executive director. I am very proud of the work we have accomplished so far, which has



included the distribution of thousands of dollars in direct aid to trans Coloradans, successful efforts to assist in modernizing our state's laws related to legal transition, and over 60 name change workshops held to date. I am beyond excited to see what the future holds for us!

What is your proudest professional accomplishment?

Without a doubt, being named to the National LGBT Bar Association's "40 Best LGBTQ+ Lawyers Under 40" this year.

What advice would you give to law students as they prepare to graduate and to recent graduates?

Intentionally invest in your hobbies and relationships outside of law! While job satisfaction is certainly a part of a happy life, finding ways to create, unplug, set boundaries, and be in community with good people is the key.

What do you know now that you wish you had known in law school?

When I started law school, I swore I would never go into family law. I wanted to be a civil rights lawyer because I wanted to make the world a better place, especially for trans people, and litigating civil rights cases like the ones that inspired me to consider law as a

career seemed like a natural goal. But over time, I learned that while a practice area like family law might not be traditionally thought of as public service work, over 80% of people are pro se in some Colorado family courts, resulting in a huge access-to-justice gap that often disproportionately affects racial minorities and creates a desperate need for affordable, trans-informed representation.

Most trans individuals interact with the legal system the same way that anyone else would—for help with forming a business, an unreasonable landlord, or advance directives. I wish that I would have known how many opportunities to meaningfully improve lives come from things that are often overlooked as mundane. Though they may not be as shiny as high-profile litigation, there are innumerable paths to making the world better through a legal career.

When I am not working, you can find me . . .

On a river or somewhere in the mountains you hopefully can't find me!

Would you like to be featured as the Last Word? Email law-communications@colorado.edu.

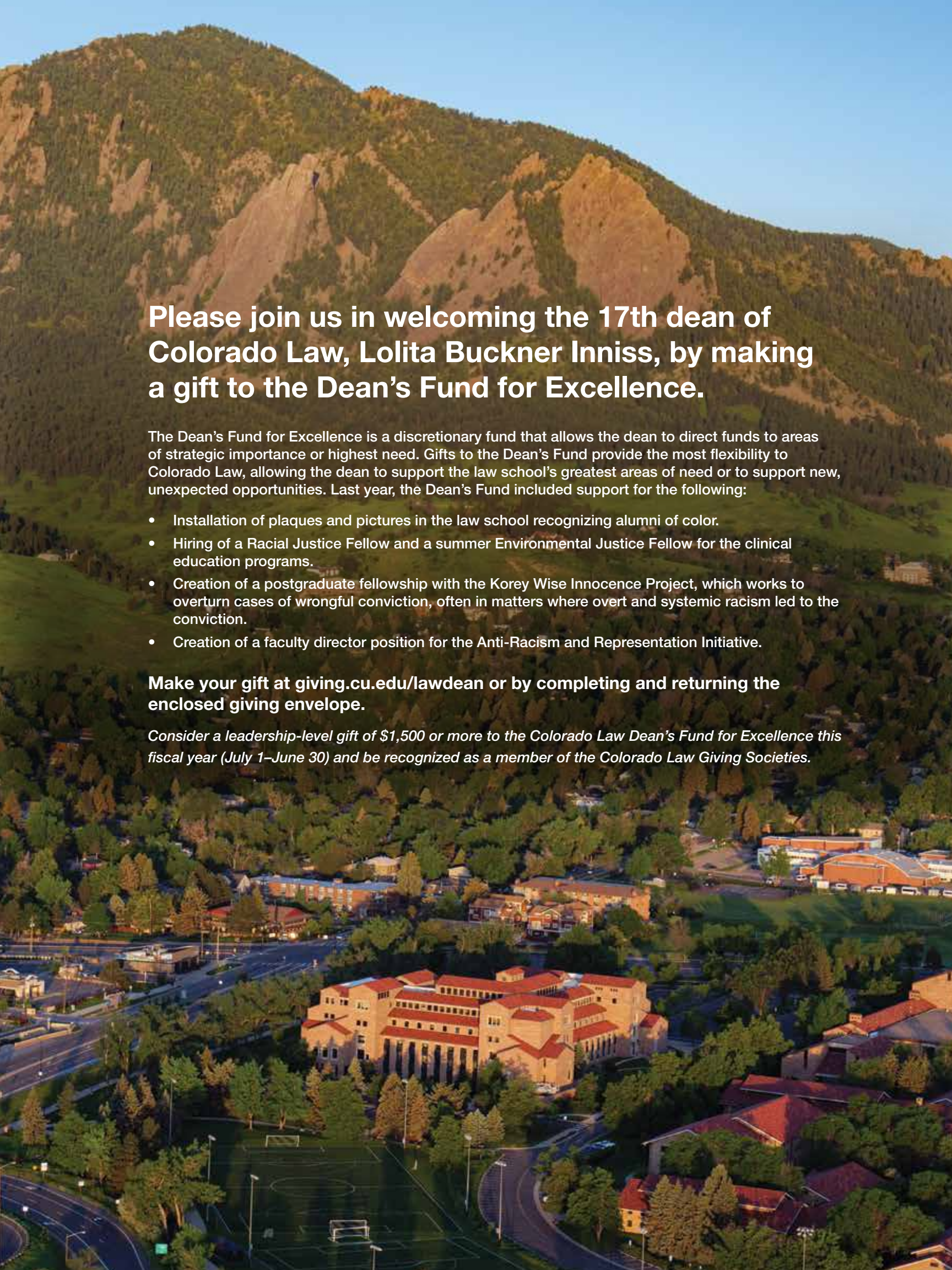
Please join us in welcoming the 17th dean of Colorado Law, Lolita Buckner Inniss, by making a gift to the Dean's Fund for Excellence.

The Dean's Fund for Excellence is a discretionary fund that allows the dean to direct funds to areas of strategic importance or highest need. Gifts to the Dean's Fund provide the most flexibility to Colorado Law, allowing the dean to support the law school's greatest areas of need or to support new, unexpected opportunities. Last year, the Dean's Fund included support for the following:

- Installation of plaques and pictures in the law school recognizing alumni of color.
- Hiring of a Racial Justice Fellow and a summer Environmental Justice Fellow for the clinical education programs.
- Creation of a postgraduate fellowship with the Korey Wise Innocence Project, which works to overturn cases of wrongful conviction, often in matters where overt and systemic racism led to the conviction.
- Creation of a faculty director position for the Anti-Racism and Representation Initiative.

Make your gift at giving.cu.edu/lawdean or by completing and returning the enclosed giving envelope.

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Homecoming and Reunions Nov. 5–6, 2021

This fall, 20 classes (graduation years ending in “0,” “5,” “1,” and “6”) will celebrate their reunions in person. We invite these alumni to participate in the Digital Reunion Memory Book to connect with classmates and learn about what they have been up to since graduation.

colorado.edu/law/homecoming

41st Annual Alumni Awards Banquet March 10, 2022

Celebrate esteemed alumni and friends at Colorado Law’s signature alumni event.

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