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Supporting Inclusiveness at Seattle U. and in the Law

Mark Niles

American University Washington College of Law, mniles@american.edu

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BY DEAN MARK C. NILES

disagreements and fissures that arise in any broad coalition. I quickly took on the role of co-chair of the coalition with Alex, and we created a product that everyone in the coalition could agree upon and take pride in. United, we scheduled a meeting with the dean to discuss our proposal, but were shocked and disappointed to find that he was not interested in hearing the student perspective on the lack of diversity at the school nor the benefits that enhanced diversity could provide Stanford University's law school.

Looking back, I am sure that part of the

lege of Law, and now as dean of the Seattle University School of Law.

One of the many things that drew me across the country to Seattle University from my hometown of Washington, D.C., was the school's focus on diversity and its commitment to promoting social justice within and beyond the four walls of the academy. This commitment includes a robust dedication to attracting faculty, staff, and students from the broadest range of backgrounds and experience. In many ways, Seattle University School of Law is the kind of school that my colleagues in the Coalition envisioned dur-

Supporting Inclusiveness at Seattle University School of Law

My first serious thoughts about the need to advocate for the diversification of law school faculty arose while I was a student at Stanford Law School. After a semester-long externship at the NAACP Legal Defenses Fund in Washington, D.C., in 1990, the fall of my third year, I returned to law school feeling a bit disconnected from my studies and my classmates. One of my closest friends, Alexandra McKay (currently an executive vice president at Casey Family Programs Foundation in Seattle), convinced me to work with a group she was helping to organize called Coalition for a Diversified Faculty. The group had been inspired, in large part, by our study of the burgeoning scholarly discipline of Critical Race Theory and by some of its pioneers, like my professor and mentor Chuck Lawrence and my current Seattle University School of Law colleague Richard Delgado.

The group was a true coalition of a wide range of student organizations dedicated to a single objective: the promotion of racial, gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, religious, national origin, and other diversity in our law school. We worked for months on what we called an "affirmative action plan" for law school hiring, going through scores of drafts and addressing and resolving the kinds of



reason for the dean's dismissive response was his belief that his law school had done much in the pursuit of gender and racial justice in the decades since he was a law student, and the dean rightly felt a sense of pride in those achievements. I went on to graduate and then to a successful legal career — first in private practice, then at the United States Department of Justice, and later as a professor and associate dean at American University Washington Col-

ing my days as a student.

Accepting the appointment as dean of Seattle University School of Law has been the high point in my career. I did not hesitate to take on this wonderful opportunity to lead one of the most respected law schools in the country. As I get to know students, faculty, staff, alumni, and Washington State Bar members, I am even more confident I made the right choice.

The time I have spent at Seattle

University School of Law has already exceeded my expectations. The support and enthusiasm that I have experienced from everyone, including the school's alumni and the rest of Seattle's legal community, has been overwhelming and gratifying.

As dean of Seattle University School of Law, I will work hard to avoid resting on the laurels of what has already been achieved. Each generation has its own diversity issues and objectives. Progress in some areas should never be used as a reason not to remain vigilant in the ongoing mission of creating a just, equitable, and inclusive world. I will be open to the ideas and suggestions of students, colleagues, and legal professionals to define what diversity means in the twenty-first century and to create the best strategies for achieving, protecting, and enhancing this diversity now and for years to come.

It became clear to me, almost from my first day in Seattle, that each of Washington's three law schools plays a vital role in supporting inclusiveness in the legal profession. I look forward to partnering with students and faculty, with bench and bar, and with community members to inspire and educate a new

generation of lawyers dedicated to working toward inclusiveness and justice for all. ☺

Stanford Law graduate Mark C. Niles joined Seattle University School of Law as dean and professor of law on July 1, 2010. He left a position as associate dean for academic affairs and professor at American University Washington College of Law. After graduating from Stanford Law, he served as a clerk for the Honorable Francis Murnaghan Jr., of the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, and has practiced in both private practice and at the U.S. Department of Justice. Dean Niles has published numerous articles and essays on subjects including the Ninth Amendment, federal tort liability, airline security regulation, and the first decade of the tenure of Justice Clarence Thomas. This column is edited by the WSBA Committee for Diversity.

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