

Why Diversity Matters

Our nation's recent racial flare-ups show that many don't think the legal system plays fair. Law schools can help. We highlight 20 professors who are making a difference when it comes to diversity in legal education

BY MIKE STETZ

When it comes to the importance of diversity in the legal field and in our nation's law schools, look to Baltimore.

Earlier this year, it was burning.

A young African-American man was dead after being arrested and transported in a police van. Riots broke out. The National Guard was called in. The situation was so dire that the Baltimore Orioles played a home game with no fans being allowed to attend.

And then came calm. It came after the military presence, but also after Baltimore's State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby announced that the six officers involved

in the death of Freddie Gray were to be indicted. It was a surprisingly quick and bold decision.

Mosby is African-American, and some observers feel her race affected the situation. She appealed for no more violence.

"I have heard your calls for 'No justice, no peace,'" she said. "However, your peace is sincerely needed as I work to deliver justice on behalf of Freddie Gray."

One headline afterward: "Marilyn Mosby is the latest example of why Black Lawyers Matter."

Situations such as this are also why law school diversity matters, experts say. If

law schools don't produce lawyers who are racially diverse and come from varied economic backgrounds, the lawyers of tomorrow will be ill-equipped to handle the challenges of our changing society, they say.

"It's very important that we have lawyers from all backgrounds who understand the plights of different people," said Michael Satz, a law professor at University of Idaho College of Law.

A diverse law school means students get the opportunity to interact and learn from others who have different life experiences. And that gives law students a better, more robust legal education, he said.

"It helps students gain perspective," he said. "And you can put a face on that perspective. It's your classmate. It's not a case study."

Satz is one of 20 law professors recognized by The National Jurist for making a significant contribution to diversity in legal education.

Arguably, it's a critical time for investment in diversity, given the recent social upheaval in many parts of the nation.

Baltimore. Ferguson, Mo. New York. North Charleston, S.C. Cincinnati. All have been flash points when it comes to issues of police brutality. Black Lives Matter is an increasingly potent force, drawing attention to police shootings. More elected leaders, including President Obama, are questioning the nation's incarceration rate for people of color, particularly blacks and Hispanics.

Recent racial incidents have also prompted closer examinations of the criminal justice system and its diversity levels. For instance, a study done this year showed that 95 percent of elected prosecutors are white. Eighty-three percent are male. Just 1 percent are women of color. Critics say that imbalance is not a healthy one.

And it's not just the nation's elected prosecutors who lack diversity. Eighty-eight percent of the nation's attorneys are white. As Deborah Rhode, a Stanford Law School professor wrote in The Washington Post this May:

"The legal profession supplies presidents, governors, lawmakers, judges, prosecutors, general counsels, and heads of corporate, government, nonprofit and legal

Leaders in Diversity

The National Jurist received nearly 100 nominations for outstanding minority law professors who have furthered diversity efforts in legal education. We pared the list down to 20 because their efforts went beyond the norm. We present them in alphabetical order.

Rachel Anderson

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, William S. Boyd School of Law

Rachel Anderson has had her hand in a number of programs that offer an opportunity for law students to put critical perspectives on race and law into practice at the law school and in the community. One, the Youth & Justice Workshop, is an annual community event in which youth

engage in conversation about their rights and responsibilities. The sessions are held in small groups, with teams of African-American police officers, lawyers, judges, law students, graduate students and fraternity and sorority members. In the Youth Voting Rights Project, which Anderson co-created, high school teachers and law students engage in education on advanced citizenship. This, too, has now become an annual program.

Mario Barnes

University of California, Irvine

Mario Barnes has long championed diversity efforts, both in the military and in legal education. He currently serves as co-director of the school's Center on Law, Equality and Race. This year, he was the recipient of the Clyde Ferguson Jr. Award, given by the Association of American Law Schools, Minority Groups Section. That award honors "an outstanding law teacher who in the course of his or her career has achieved excellence in the areas of public service, teaching and scholarship." Barnes is a retired U.S. Navy commander, who wrote on race and gender diversity when serving.

Margaret Burnham

Northeastern University School of Law

Margaret Burnham is the founder and director of the school's Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project, which aims to document every racially motivated killing in the South between 1930 and 1970. Through that, the clinic hopes to deepen lawyering skills required for effective civil rights practice. Students learn the dynamics of "cause lawyering" and how to integrate legal doctrine,



Burnham

practice and ethics. Burnham is also teaching select high school students to critically examine American race history, concepts of restorative justice and the law through the lens of Jim Crow and Civil Rights-era cold cases.

Paul Butler

Georgetown University Law Center

Paul Butler, a former federal prosecutor, has served as chair of Georgetown's Diversity Committee.



Not one to sit on the sidelines, he gets personally involved with student diversity efforts. He works with the Black Lives Matter movement on campus, which seeks to make the campus more inclusive and welcoming to all Georgetown students.

The school notes his popularity, citing how his seminar, "Race, Gender and Criminal Law," has a waiting list of more than 50 students. Butler teaches criminal law, race relations law and critical theory. He is the author of the book, "Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice." He's currently working on a new book, "The Chokehold: Policing Black Men."

Christopher David Ruiz Cameron

Southwestern Law School

Christopher David Ruiz Cameron has been the most active member of Southwestern's faculty in advising, mentoring, promoting and providing scholarship opportunities to Latino law students. According to the

