WELCOMING DEAN
LOLITA BUCKNER INNISS
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 assaults 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.

—Dean Lolita Buckner Inniss
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, Lollia 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 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 7, 2020 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 vote 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.

In Brief

Inaugural Preorientation Program Readies Students for Law School

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, Lollia 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 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 7, 2020 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 vote 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, 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, Lollia 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 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 7, 2020 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 vote 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.
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 St. 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.

“This certificate will be a great asset to put on résumés and mention during interviews. “The certificate will be a great asset to put on résumés and mention during interviews. 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. 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.

“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 5.

The class, comprising Juris Doctors, 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:

1. 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 clients realize their full potential.

2. “So often we are taught to sublimate our needs or desires or to edit what we want,” she said. “I need confident leaders takeaway as graduates move forward with their lives and careers.

3. “Failure not only teaches us how to survive losses,” 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 tumult, 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.”

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 5.

The class, comprising Juris Doctors, 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:

1. 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 clients realize their full potential.

2. “So often we are taught to sublimate our needs or desires or to edit what we want,” she said. “I need confident leaders takeaway as graduates move forward with their lives and careers.

3. “Failure not only teaches us how to survive losses,” 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 tumult, 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.”

Her call to action was not to live in fear, but to instead recognize the fear or challenge, embrace it, and let the acknowledgment 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.
Kristelia García: Where intellectual property meets economics
By Samantha Swantek ('21)

A ssociate 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 interact 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 “Supercontracting” in the Washington Law Review. You argue against conventional wisdom that strict property rules prompt intellectual property (IP) owners to contract-for 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 “supercontracting.” 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 the licensor and licensee. These one-size-fits-all licenses are anathema to a market in which different parties express different degrees of need and ask for different degrees of protection. Perhaps the most notable case is the music industry, where large music labels may seek far more protection from infringement than small independent labels. Supercontracting is the only option to allow for such varying needs.

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 possibility 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 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 possibility 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 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.

By Samantha Swantek ('21)

Amicus Fall 2021

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 true? 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 get users to upgrade the software; (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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

This was such a fun and interesting project to work on! The inputs for research in this area came from reading a few articles in the popular press in which different parties expressed concern 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.
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 researching 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
Growing up, Inniss had 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 idea that you're on the ground every day being pragmatic about diversity, equity, and inclusion. I want people to say, 'She's a Black woman dean.' I want them to say, 'She's a great dean and she's a Black woman.'" In this, Inniss believes a DEI focus is necessary to strong programs. "I believe that's part of the real value of me having this opportunity," she said. "I feel that her identity is also an important part of what she brings to the deanship. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are also about excellence, and the faculty is excited 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 programs. "I believe that's part of the real value of me having this opportunity," she said. "I feel that her identity is also an important part of what she brings to the deanship. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are also about excellence, and the faculty is excited 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 is well known for her knowledge of culture, and she's passionate about teaching as well as research. "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 idea that you're on the ground every day being pragmatic about diversity, equity, and inclusion. I want people to say, 'She's a Black woman dean.' I want them to say, 'She's a great dean and she's a Black woman.'"

"It was a great opportunity to litigate and do justice," Inniss said. "I was very happy to have this chance to represent her." On the other hand, she is “just a senior law professor who came into this role seeking to do her very best.” In fact, she describes herself as a “devoted and passionate advocate.”

Inniss has always been interested in the law and its role in society, which is why she chose to pursue a career in law. "I feel that the fact that all four finalists were women is important to me,” Inniss noted. "I like to think that the fact that all four finalists were women is important to me.”

Inniss believes a DEI focus is necessary to strong programs. "I believe that's part of the real value of me having this opportunity," she said. "I feel that her identity is also an important part of what she brings to the deanship. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are also about excellence, and the faculty is excited 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 feels that it’s important to be a strong advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. "I'm very much tied to my identity as an African American woman, and I'm also a plain and simple woman who is very conscious of that representation in all areas of life," she said. "People in Colorado just make things happen."
“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 WoCC came to fruition after a group of 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 Shellenger (’11).
- Natasha Viteri interviewed Gillian Asque (’17).
- Taylor Schad interviewed Edyael Casaperalta (’18).

Interviews have been edited and condensed.

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

Hiwot Covell (’09), 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 PC.

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 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 did not 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 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 to 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 is being done is reassuring that we deserve a seat at the table.

You are the next person? You are. It takes audacity and the skill to become partner. I don’t have that confidence that, one, I have all the skills, and I know I’m a smart person, but I don’t have that confidence that, one, I have all the skills, 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 in touch with you directly. Why don’t you then wish? Why wouldn’t you be as deserving as the next partner? 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.

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 Slater Rocheford Smith & Shellenberger LLP. Prior to that, I was a partner at Smith & Shellenberger LLC. 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 younger 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 IFM 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 wasn’t helpful, both in terms of the legal adoption because of the associated costs, both through attorney’s fees and private adoption agency fees. Simultaneously, I’m a big fan of Native American law because I was adopted by my father. I became a Native American, both through the Idaho court process and a federal adoption. My legal education included having the opportunity 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, it would have been impossible to be able to experience. The application of ICWA has become a very prevalent part of my practice, both in my advisory role as a private counsel and volunteer (training judges and magistrate), and in my advisory role as a private counsel and magistrate 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.

Where do you currently work?

I am an attorney for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Region 5, 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 was 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 came to introduce himself because he’s a great professor. Little did I know that for that year, everyone who talked to him would introduce him with that conversation, the first person he called on. So my friend Eric was called on the first day, and we all expected to hear the same introduction 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?

I found I 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 Zarzocki [11]. I actually met him through diversity weekend at CU Law. I shared my interests, and he asked where he practiced in, and throughout law school he was a very great mentor and person I could rely on. He was always willing to talk, and even more so the only woman of color, in instances where I am the only person of color, and I think that’s very important. I’ve had a lot of exposure to that, because one of the attorneys I admire and respect is also a postdoc in the field. I 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?

I found I 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 Zarzocki [11]. I actually met him through diversity weekend at CU Law. I shared my interests, and he asked where he practiced in, and throughout law school he was a very great mentor and person I could rely on. He was always willing to talk, and even more so the only woman of color, in instances where I am the only person of color, and I think that’s very important.
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 in our cases. 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. Electric cooperatives 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 to 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 corners of the U.S., which are least connected, are in the 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. I knew that I wanted to understand how telecommunication policies impact 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 I wanted to become 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 attorneys. She has been a role model for me and opened doors that I 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 (’21) interviews Edyael Casaperalta (’18)

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

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. Electric cooperatives 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 to 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 corners of the U.S., which are least connected, are in the 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. I knew that I wanted to understand how telecommunication policies impact 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 I wanted to become 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 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 Klassen & 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 interacting 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.

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. Electric cooperatives 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 to 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 corners of the U.S., which are least connected, are in the 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. I knew that I wanted to understand how telecommunication policies impact 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 I wanted to become 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 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

Taylor Schad (she/her/ella) is a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe and a recent graduate of Colorado Law, where she focused her studies in environmental law. She hopes to work with government entities to strengthen tribal relations regarding treaty and natural resource rights.

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. Go toward the people that are your cheerleaders and will mentor 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/ella) is a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe and a recent graduate of Colorado Law, where she focused her studies in environmental law. She hopes to work with government entities to strengthen tribal relations regarding treaty and natural resource rights.

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. Go toward the people that are your cheerleaders and will mentor 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/ella) is a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe and a recent graduate of Colorado Law, where she focused her studies in environmental law. She hopes to work with government entities to strengthen tribal relations regarding treaty and natural resource rights.

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. Go toward the people that are your cheerleaders and will mentor 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/ella) is a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe and a recent graduate of Colorado Law, where she focused her studies in environmental law. She hopes to work with government entities to strengthen tribal relations regarding treaty and natural resource rights.

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. Go toward the people that are your cheerleaders and will mentor 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/ella) is a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe and a recent graduate of Colorado Law, where she focused her studies in environmental law. She hopes to work with government entities to strengthen tribal relations regarding treaty and natural resource rights.

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. Go toward the people that are your cheerleaders and will mentor 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.
Celebrating 40 Years of Honoring Distinguished Alumni and Friends

For 40 years you have celebrated with us as we recognized our distinguished alumni and friends. Thank you to our sponsors, alumni, and friends who have contributed year after year to the success of Colorado Law’s signature alumni event. Together, you raised over $1 million to support Colorado Law (2005–21).

380 TOTAL AWARDS GIVEN

$1M+ TOTAL EVENT PROCEEDS RAISED TO SUPPORT COLORADO LAW (2005–21)

$730K RAISED FOR THE DEAN’S FUND FOR EXCELLENCE (2005–21)

$215K RAISED FOR THE LAW ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP FUND (2005–21)

51 LAW ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED (2005–20)

Thank you to our 2021 event sponsors:
Names in bold denote sponsorship for 10 years or more.

GOLD
Chayet & Danco, LLC  Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP  Hogan Lovells  Polsinelli  University of Colorado Foundation  Wheeler Trigg O’Donnell LLP

SILVER
Ballard Spahr LLP  Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP  Colorado and Denver Bar Associations and Colorado Bar Association CLE  Crane & Tejada, P.C.  Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP  Faegre Drinker

Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP  Holland & Hart LLP  Ireland Stapleton Pryor & Pascoe, PC  The Knows Family  Lewis Roca  Milgrom & Daskam  New Jersey Institute for Social Justice

Snell & Wilmer  Wilborn Sullivan Meck and Tooley PC  Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP

BRONZE
Anonymous in honor of Dean Anaya  Colorado LGBT Bar Association  Conscience Bay Company

Colorado Trial Lawyers Association  Dorsey & Whitney LLP  The Gary (’70) and Regina Jackson family  Gebhardt Emerson Moodie Bonanne, LLC  Hurth, Sisk, & Blakemore LLP

Rathod | Mohamedbhai LLC  Marisa Hudson-Arney (’01) and Ryan Arney (’00)

FRIENDS
Anonymous in honor of Dean Anaya  Colorado LGBT Bar Association  Conscience Bay Company

Daniel A. Vigil (’82)  Judicial Arbiter Group, Inc.  Kissinger & Fellman, P.C.

Marisa Hudson-Arney (’01) and Ryan Arney (’00)

Native American Rights Fund  Sheemaker Ghiassi & Schwartz LLC  University of Colorado, University Counsel  Vicente Sederberg LLP

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

To learn more about sponsorship opportunities, please email lawbanquet@colorado.edu.
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 Aanaya 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 provides 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 membership consists 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 approved the service of three departing members, Darla Daniel (91), Mark Fogg (76), and Marissa Hudson-Arney (96). 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 the Law Alumni Awards Banquet; attend Homecoming; promote and support Colorado Law in these challenging times; and, of course, give generously to the law school or one of its many scholarships.

All of us on the LAB want you 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. You can reach us out 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

Colorado 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. Nikki T. Bland ('05), 3rd Judicial District
Christopher Brock ('14), Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
William "Bill" R. Burt ('83), Exxon Mobil Corporation (retired)
Michael Carrigan (Chair-Elect) ('94), Holland & Hart LLP
Marco Chayet ('97), Chayet & Dávila, 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 Attorney Group
Tom Galluzzi ('14), Cheney Galluzzi & Howard, LLC
Stanley Garnett ('82), Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP
Velvetta Goulightly-Howell ('81), Senior-to-Senior International Network of Professional African American Women, Inc.
D. Jeffery Grimes ('85), Astex Pharmaceuticals
Greg Hearing ('12), Gordon Rex Scully Marnisalik, LLP
John V. Howard ('87), Boyd's Green Meditation
Addi Kulkarni-Nguyen ('15), Davis Graham & Dunfey LLP
Calvin McLaugh ('12), Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie LLP
Kristin Mosley ('97), Porbeck Browning & Bluhm LLP
Richard Murray ('97), Polaski
LisaNeal-Graves ('90), retired
Linda S. Kato ('85), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8
Gregory J. Ramos ('92), Sherman & Howard L.L.C.
Siddhartha Ratnath ('87), Ratnath/Mohamedtalati LLC
David W. Stark ('Chair) ('79), Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP
Beate Tedja ('12), Drane & Tedja, P.C.
Keith Tooley ('86), Wilmot Sullivan Meck & Tooley, P.C.
Sarah Wallace ('99), Robert Spurr PLLC
Andrea Wang ('01), U.S. Attorney’s Office, District of Colorado

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

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 1999.

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 Thai 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 2000. 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 Bell tradition in the same office, something of a rarity in faraway Chicago. Asque's

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.
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 Kermie 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 Master of Laws in Taxation Program at the University of Denver Graduate Tax Program.

Margaret Vellar ('99) 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.

2003
Trisha K. Harris ('03) was named of counsel at White Bear Anikele 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.

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.

2010
Chris Achatz ('10) was promoted to partner at Koenig, Oetker, Taylor, Schoenfeld & Gadsby PC (KO Law Firm). Achatz’s practice focuses on structuring and negotiating complex technology transactions, including data privacy and security matters.

2011
Shrin Chuhaj ('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. Chuhaj has transformed a lifelong passion for arts and music into a legal practice that supports the creative industries.

2012
Brent Owen ('12) was elevated to partner at international law firm Squire Patton Boggs LLP. Owen handles complex commercial litigation, focusing on high-stakes class actions and energy disputes.
2013
Nora Katz ('13) was elected to partner at Walder Lasseron Dorf & 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 & security 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 Curran 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 Curran York & Associates LLC. Johnson initially joined the firm as a law clerk while attending the University of Colorado School of Law.

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

2015
Evan Bloningen ('15) joined Spencer Fane LLP as counsel in the firm’s Denver office. Bloningen 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 represents clients operating in the cannabis industry on licensing, regulatory compliance, and enforcement matters.

Hunter Metcalf ('16) started a new job as corporate counsel at Wildfires 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 Casaperata ('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 AMERPND, 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 Lippart ('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 bestseller lists since its debut last spring. Lippart balanced the publishing process with 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.

Eric 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 Mulvihill ('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 Wilner ('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, Wilner 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.

In Memoriam

Robert Mac Bennett ('52) Thomas James Golden ('54) C. Victor Quinn ('55)
Richard Paul Brady ('80) Roger D. Hunt ('60) Eric Paul Ruderman ('73)
Marc Rene Brosseau ('76) Phyllis Ann Kaplan ('84) Susan A. Stearns ('79)
James C. Bull ('68) Howard C. Klemme ('54) Roger E. Stevens ('57)
James E. Carpenter ('57) James M. Lamme III ('73) Robert C. Wolf ('92)
Marilyn Joyce David ('82) W.D. Milliken ('53) Emily Calhoun, former faculty Jay Wilson Enyart ('71) Clared F. Morgan ('68)
Robert G. Fredrickson ('57) Robert Masao Oshima ('69)

Emmy 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 known for her expertise in the areas of sex discrimination, gender bias, and critical race theory. She was a gifted watercolor artist and an award-winning poet. One of her poems, “Eye on the Sparrow,” seemed to me to capture her fierce spirit, her appreciation of nature, and her love of life—a quality she inimitably linked to the undeniable awareness that all is not exactly as it should be:

We are told that God looks over all, creation seeming 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.

— Emily Calhoun, selected by Robert Kerr

By Emily Calhoun, selected by Robert Kerr

Psalms 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 heroes, all the goodness all the days of life, in double-words, this song — of green that will turn amber-awn,

land once ice-dissolve beneath the sun

and we the centerpiece

She is fretting: should She cut her losses choose, this time, the sparrow.

— by Emily Calhoun, selected by Robert Kerr

Howard Klemme
By Jane Thompson, Wise Law Library

Howard Klemme (’54), age 90, died 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

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 1984 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.

Many days that Howard visited the law library, he would stop by to say hello to me and to our Faculty Services Assistant Matt Zafraños. 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 14, 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—“Olive Wendell Holmes: The Common Law—that he hadn’t wanted to return. I suggested that the law library purchase his preferred edition of this 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 never saw Howard again.

In Memoriam
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 skyrocket.

The two biggest obstacles that trans people face in obtaining corrected IDs are 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 80 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 LGBTIQ+ 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?

I wish that I would have known how many unreasonable landlords, or advance directives, or 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.
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.

colorado.edu/law/banquet