110Th Commencement Applauds Pioneering Women

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UB Law School’s 110th Commencement was, as always, a ceremony imbued with great expectations for the professional future of the graduating class. But it was also permeated with a proud sense of the school’s history. With festive banners and fond words, the ceremony looked back to 1899, the year the first two women were graduated from the Law School. And a special guest — Lillian E. Cowan ’27, a pioneering woman lawyer who still practices — was honored as a role model for young women entering the profession.

The May 15, 1999, graduation, held at the Center for the Arts, featured remarks early in the proceedings by Faculty Speaker Kenneth F. Joyce, a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor. Joyce was looking backward as well — to John F. Kennedy’s presidential inaugural address in 1961.

“Many of you will, I am sure, remember the most famous line of that address,” Joyce said, “when President Kennedy inspired millions of young persons by saying, ‘Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.’ I, too, was taken by that line, but I was more taken by another passage — one less remembered but one which has continually come back to me over the years.”

Citing his work with the New York State Law Revision Commission and a local judge’s difficult decision about whether to take a child from his parent if the parent was not “living up to her parental duties,” Joyce said that passage, by JFK came again to mind. He quoted it: “With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help but knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.”

“That passage, of course, was intended for all of us,” Joyce said, “but it is peculiarly applicable to lawyers and lawyers-to-be like yourself, who are the architects and engineers of the rule of law, without which society could not function. I truly believe that the rule of law is God’s work on earth, and that lawyers like you are called to be the high priests and priestesses of God’s work. And I also know that by your perseverance today you are up to that work.”
Ent 1999

Hot Cargo String
Band members
Professor Frank
Munger, Professor
James B. Alleson
and Regina M.
Sagesser '99

Amy C. Martouche
'99, left, and
Nancyrae Kjelgaard
'99, right.

Professor Lucinda M.
Finley and Kimberly
A. Fannin '99
Associate Professor Makau Mutua, another student favorite, reflected on his own intellectual and life journey that led to law school. First attracted to the profession by the respect he saw accorded to his lawyer uncle in Kenya — "when he spoke, people listened; people consulted him; many liked him; in short, he seemed powerful" — he thought differently upon entering law school. "What the study of law taught me," he said, "was that the law is a language of power. That the law and the rights and duties that are implied by it do not have an essential fixed core like fairness, a constant that is frozen for all time. I learned that the law is in fact malleable."

Given that, he told the graduating class, "Wherever you work as a lawyer, you will work at the intersection of power and powerlessness, and you must work to reduce powerlessness. You can do this well in the public interest, in law firms, in government, in the private sector, in the non-profit world, in the courts. Ultimately I challenge you to believe that, as Martin Luther King said, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice anywhere."

Graduating students Stephanie A. Cole and Russell B. Klein spoke in tandem fashion, with Cole running through our country's essential guarantees of freedom — the Bill of Rights — and noting that each amendment has been subject to numerous challenges, interpretations and extensions. "What do these controversies, these reversals, say about the rule of law?" she asked. "Does it govern us in a manner that is consistent and meaningful, or does it blunder along, finding success in only those moments when the majority is pleased with the results it has wrought? Is occasional failure the downfall of the rule of law?"

"Perhaps it is the questions — what is right, what is just, and how can we use the law to accomplish those goals — that every member of this graduating class should keep in mind. This does not necessarily mean adopting an ideology and sticking to it. What it does mean is listening to your conscience and working for your beliefs."

Noted Klein: "We have come to a crossroads where, paradoxically, the law can be said to be driving people apart, while at the same time trying to force people together. The ugly head of hatred and the beautiful melody of innate human rights have sometimes interacted in our society in disastrous fashion. The response is to throw another law onto the fire in another effort to bring us closer together, or at least prevent us from hurting one another — censorship on the Internet and gun laws, for example, to deal with the racists and hate mongers of society."

"It seems worthy to discuss the possibility that the law has become more and more a drug to suppress the symptoms of an ill society, when the panacea to the disease has always been in front of us — man and woman, people of all cultures, backgrounds and orientations — in short, all of us here, working together."

The afternoon's keynote speaker was Hon. Denise E. O'Donnell '82, U.S. attorney for the Western District of New York. Her remarks took on a historical note as well, as she noted that the Class of 1999 was the last graduating class of the 20th century and thus will become the first new lawyers of the new millennium.

Looking at the Buffalo Law School experience a century ago, O'Donnell noted that it was more of a trade school then, staffed by volunteer lawyers and judges in the downtown Ellicott Square
Left: Kinda Serafi '99, far right, with her grandfather, center, and aunt.

Dean R. Nils Olsen Jr.

Rochelle D. Jackson '99, far left, Cheryl S. Jones '99, center, and Melissa R. Brown '99, far right, celebrate with their loved ones.
Building. The first two women graduates — Helen Z.M. Rodgers and Cecil B. Wiener — “were actually lawyers, more than 20 years before they were granted the right to vote and full citizenship. Nor was the legal profession viewed as a particularly admirable one at the turn of the century. Law was viewed by many as a tool of big business — and served as an obstacle during the first part of the 20th century to the social reforms of the New Deal and the labor union movement.”

That changed over the century, and “to a large extent, the Buffalo Law School has embodied this mid-20th century notion of law as a catalyst for social change, and has been able to keep this legal philosophy alive through lectures and seminars, legal symposiums, faculty commitment and opportunities for public service, particularly through the legal clinic programs.”

But “as the curtain drops on the 20th century,” O’Donnell said, “in many ways we have come full circle, espousing a legal philosophy more reminiscent of the self-contained view of the law that was prevalent at the turn of the century 100 years ago.”

The challenge for the Class of 1999, she said, was this: “You have the ability to fashion a new form of jurisprudence that can once again involve lawyers in the struggle for progressive social change. You can bring your mastery of technology that is certain to revolutionize the 21st century to bear to find new solutions to age-old problems. You can bring your diverse perspectives and your sense of values to the profession and seek ways to restore public confidence in legal institutions and in lawyers.”

Before the conferral of degrees, Professor Lucinda M. Finley presented

Lillian E. Cowan ’27, a 92-year-old lawyer who still practices, with a plaque that tied together the visions of past and future that characterized the ceremony. “In recognition of Lillian E. Cowan of the Class of 1927,” it read. “Practicing law for more than 70 years in Western New York, she continues to serve as a role model for new law graduates entering the profession.”

As a student, Cowan had met those pioneering first women graduates. “They were wonderful women,” she said, “but they seemed awfully old.” With perfect comic timing, she paused.

Then: “They must have been 50.”

She also summarized her career: “Been there, done that.” The audience roared, and she raised her voice to finish: “And I forgot half of it.”

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Melissa R. Brown ’99

Professor Kenneth F. Joyce and Professor Malika Mutua

Commencement
The following graduates received awards at Commencement:

- Elizabeth Ann Reiter, of Buffalo, N.Y., received the Max Koren Award, which honors the senior judged by the faculty to be the outstanding member of the graduating class. Reiter also received the Carlos C. Alden Award as the senior making the greatest contribution to the Buffalo Law Review.

- Gerald Bamberger, of Rochester, N.Y., received the John N. Bennett Achievement Award, for exemplifying the highest standards of the profession by virtue of scholastic achievement, leadership and dedication to the ideals of the Law School. Bamberger also was a joint recipient, along with Melissa Renee Brown, of Amherst, N.Y., of the Judge William J. Regan Award, presented to the member of the graduating class who has demonstrated the greatest proficiency in estates and surrogate’s law, and who is motivated by a strong concern for public service and public welfare.

- Kinda Serafi, of Rye, N.Y., received the Dale S. Margulis Award, for contributing the most to the Law School and the community. Serafi also received a Law Faculty Award for improving life at the Law School, and for her successful completion of two concentrations — Family Law and Law & Social Justice. In addition, she was elected to The Order of Barristers, a national oralist society whose members include students who have shown dedication and who have excelled in the art of oral advocacy and service to the Moot Court board.

- Joseph B. Laino, of Clarence Center, N.Y., and Roseanne J. Shaw, of Buffalo, N.Y., jointly received the Charles Duthch Award, for demonstrating the greatest proficiency in courses, examinations and independent research in the law of real property.

- Christopher Louis Jacobs, of Buffalo, N.Y., received the Adolf Homburger Law Alumni Association Award, given to a graduating senior whose academic achievements in civil procedure and whose compassion for those people best exemplify the qualities that Adolf Homburger sought to instill in his students.

- Marc William Brown, of Williamsville, N.Y., received the Judge Matthew J. Jasen Appellate Practice Award, presented to the graduating senior who in course work and Moot Court competition has shown outstanding achievement in appellate advocacy. Brown also received the UB Law Alumni Association’s GOLD Group Award, presented to a graduating law student who has demonstrated outstanding leadership skills in advancing the mission of the Law School and enhancing its reputation for excellence in legal education. In addition, Brown received a Law Faculty Award for his outstanding contributions to the Moot Court program, leading it into a new era of increased national prominence and output.

- Mary Jane Noonan, of Buffalo, N.Y., received the Robert J. Connelly Memorial Award, recognizing students who have the best performance records in the course in Trial Technique.

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- Neil Frood, of York, N.Y., and George D. Marron, of Rochester, jointly received the Prentice-Hall Award, given to the student whose academic performance in the area of taxation is outstanding. They also received the Law Faculty Award for their contribution to the law and policy of affordable housing and community economic development law. They performed with grace and dedication beyond any reasonable expectation and under sometimes difficult circumstances as the student executive editors of the Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Development Law.

- Kimberly Forte, of Williamsville, N.Y., and Mia Marie McFarlane, of Eggertsville, N.Y., jointly received the Maurice Frey Award, as students whose academic perfor-

mance in the area of family law is most exceptional.

- Kimberly Alina Balthaser, of Buffalo, N.Y., received the New York State Bar Association Law Student Bar Association Achievement Award, which recognizes activities that constitute a positive contribution through the New York State Bar Association, the American Bar Association or a local or topical bar association to the aims of the legal professional and the extension of justice to the people of the State of New York and/or the people of these United States of America.

- Paige Lesley Rizzo Mecca, of Buffalo, N.Y., received the Ethics Award.

- The Order of Barristers is a national oralist honors society. The members include students who have shown dedication and who have excelled in the art of oral advocacy and service to the Moot Court Board. Each year, 10 students are elected to membership in the organization. Ahren Brooke Astudillo, of Williamsville, N.Y., Marc William Brown, of Williamsville, N.Y., Darleen V. Gowion, of West Seneca, N.Y., Kathleen Jane Martin, of Buffalo, N.Y., Brendan James Reagan, of Addison, N.Y., Jeffrey Francis Reina, of North Tonawanda, N.Y., Patrick James Roth, of Addison, N.Y., Nancy Beth Saunders, of Corinth, N.Y., Kinda Serafin, of Rye, N.Y., and Molly Ann Sleiman, of Amherst, N.Y.

- Katherine E. Cauley, of Tonawanda, N.Y., received The 1998 Moot Evidence Award, presented for the best performance in the area of evidence.

- Law Faculty Awards are presented to those who made outstanding contributions to the Law School community. In addition to those previously mentioned, recipients are:

Patricia Marie Costanzo, of Elma, N.Y., for outstanding contributions in linking the work of the Law School with the concerns of local communities, including her work on last fall's Love Canal conference.

Theresa Marie Cusimano, of Washington, D.C., for her tireless and invaluable efforts to improve and sustain public interest programs at the Law School and to increase financial support for students pursuing public service careers.

Kimberly Forte, of Williamsville, N.Y., and Mia Marie McFarlane, of Eggertsville, N.Y., for their work as 1998 Family Law Fellows and in the Law School's clinical program. Forte, a leader of the Buffalo Public Interest Law Program, focused her work in the Special Education Law Clinic and the Family Law Colloquium on the rights of incarcerated youth to special education services. McFarlane, a dual degree student in Law and Social Work, joined with faculty from the Law School and Psychology and Social Work Departments to publish two articles on child welfare issues. She also contributed to the community response to family violence in Niagara County through her outstanding work in the Domestic Violence Clinic.

Ryan Elizabeth Harden, of North Tonawanda, N.Y., and

Stacy Renee Sandusky, of Grand Island, N.Y., who played a valuable role in making human rights and international law central to UB Law School life. They served as co-editors in chief of the Buffalo Human Rights Law Review, helping to give real meaning to this young journal and to make the Human Rights Center a hub of student activity.

David John Hoffman, of Hamburg, N.Y., was the principal organizer of the Buffalo Law Review's successful conference on "The Promise and Problems of Regionalism." The conference brought nationally recognized scholars from several disciplines to the Law School to discuss the role regional political institutions may play in addressing problems of local government. Hoffman's hard work was an important contribution to intellectual life at the Law School.

Rochelle D. Jackson, of Buffalo, N.Y., for her outstanding academic progress in the areas of criminal and public international law, both within the Law School and through various internships with non-governmental organizations in Europe. She was an active member of the Latin American Law Students Association, a leader within the student community and a student editor of Law and Policy Review.

Joane Si I an Wong, of Ridgewood, N.Y., for her dedication to public interest causes and her leadership in the Law School community. Active in the Labor & Employment Law Association, Wong took a leading role in organizing a very successful conference on sweatshops, which brought in participants from Toronto, New York City and other locales. She has been active in raising the consciousness of the Law School about poverty and welfare reform issues. She has also been active in campus-wide advocacy for Asian students.
1999 Latin Honors

Summa Cum Laude
Gerald Bamberger
Elizabeth Ann Reiter

Magna Cum Laude
Benjamin K. Bergman
Katherine E. Cauley
Michael Christopher Donlon
Randal Tod Evans
Toni Lyn Frain
George D. Marron
Timothy Patrick Noonan
Susan Deborah Reinecke
Amy M. Reiter
Dennis Kieren Schaeffer
Vicki Toscano
Kathryn Jennifer Yerge

Cum Laude
Michael S. Cerrone
Michael Joseph Chmiel
Kevin C. Clor
James Michael Connolly
Harry James Forrest
Kimberly Forte
Neil Frood
Robert J. Gutowski
David John Hoffman
Ross Shannon Howarth
David Charles Kelly
Linda Marie Kowalski
Matthew S. Lerner
Kirstin Day Lowry
Robert Marinovic
Kathleen Jane Martin
Nicole Shreib Mayer
Mia Maria McFarlane
Theresa Faith Merrill
Antoinetta Donna Muccilli
Sharon Kristen Prise
Raymond A. Regan
Jeffrey Francis Reina
Nancy Ann Santarelli
Nancy Beth Saunders
Roseanne J. Shaw
Henry Darnell Teegarden
Sara Lynne Thrasher
Matthew Dennis Witherow
Mimi May May Wong

Brenda Torres '99 and fans