
ADDRESSES

150TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DEAN ADDRESS

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ANGELA ONWUACHI-WILLIG*

One hundred fifty years ago tomorrow, eighteen professors and approximately sixty students held the first day of classes at what was then called Boston School of Law. It was 1872. The Civil War had ended less than a decade before. The telephone had not been invented yet. It was a remarkably different time in our nation's history.

Our law school's rather humble beginnings did not portend the impressive legacy that it would build over the next 150 years. At the time, the school consisted of only one small lecture hall and an adjacent room for the dean—tight quarters for a burgeoning law school with big ambitions.

Just four weeks into the first term, the Great Boston Fire of 1872 destroyed sixty-five acres in downtown Boston, including several University-owned buildings, though the home of the law school was spared. The Great Boston Fire was one of the costliest in the history of the United States. It caused the equivalent of 1.7 billion in today's dollars, and it put BU's future in jeopardy.

But the students and faculty of our inaugural class would not be deterred. Much like generations of alumni who would follow in their footsteps, they doubled down in the face of adversity and remained on a steady course.

You see, our founders had envisioned a new kind of law school, and they were determined to see it through. At the time, for aspiring attorneys who chose to attend law school, which were very few, instruction was delivered in what our esteemed Professor David Seipp describes as a "round robin" format. If you could cover the cost of tuition, you could start classes at any time. You simply attended a 6-, 12-, or 18-month series of courses until the courses circled back to where you started. Then, you earned a law degree.

* Dean, Ryan Roth Gallo and Ernest J. Gallo Professor of Law, Boston University School of Law. I would like to thank President Bob Brown and Provost Jean Morrison for their stellar leadership and support; the Boston University School of Law staff, faculty, alumni, and students who made our yearlong 150th anniversary celebration possible; and the *Boston University Law Review* editors for publishing this speech.

Here at BU Law, we introduced a more structured, rigorous curriculum—a course of study more suitable for preparing attorneys for the demands of the legal profession. We established entrance requirements to ensure our students were personally and academically equipped to pursue a career in the law. We required students to pass examinations as they progressed through their coursework. We extended the curriculum into a third year in order to deepen students' knowledge of the law before conferring a degree.

Our alumni went on to found other law schools here in Boston, across the country, and around the world, and they joined the faculty at numerous other newly established law schools in the United States, bringing with them the philosophy and pedagogy for legal education they had experienced at BU Law. Over time, these innovations developed by our faculty were adopted nationwide, defining law school for generations of aspiring attorneys.

Yes, we can fairly claim that Boston University School of Law was instrumental in laying the very foundation for legal education in this country. This spirit of innovation is in BU Law's DNA. It has guided our work as a law school since day one, and more importantly, it has inspired 150 years of alumni to push boundaries, break new ground, and imagine a world that truly lives up to the promise of equal justice for all.

Our founders also envisioned a very different kind of law school in terms of community. When they opened the law school's doors in 1872, they did so without regard to race, gender, and religion, making us one of very few law schools who can claim such a history. In fact, in the very first class at BU Law, we welcomed our first African American student and our first Asian student. It was only five years later that the first woman enrolled at BU Law. Think about that: only seven years after the end of the Civil War and nearly fifty years before women won a long-fought battle for the right to vote, our founders chose to embrace a commitment to diversity.

Many of you are familiar with the litany of "firsts" we proudly claim among our alumni as a result of this history, including but not limited to:

- The first Black man to win a case before the Supreme Court;
- The first two women in Massachusetts appointed to the bench;
- The first blind man admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court; and
- The first openly gay man to argue a case before the Supreme Court.

There are many, many more I could list, and these firsts are indeed important milestones worthy of recognition. But they fail to fully capture the ways in which our alumni have advanced the cause of justice.

Take, for example, Blanche Crozier, who served as an editor of the *Boston University Law Review* and graduated *cum laude* from BU Law in 1933. Until recently, Crozier's influence on constitutional law was largely lost to history, but we've now begun to uncover evidence that she played an important role in laying the groundwork in the fight for women's equality. In a series of journal articles published in the *BU Law Review* from 1933 to 1937, Crozier formulated

an argument that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits discrimination, not only on the basis of race, but on the basis of sex.

It was a groundbreaking theory at the time, and it would be nearly thirty years before another lawyer and civil rights activist, Pauli Murray, would advance the same argument, saying, “I admire greatly the incisive thinking which went into [Crozier’s] articles, and am sure that the effort was not wasted, only delayed.”

It was mere coincidence that Professor Murray was teaching a class here at BU Law in 1972, just a year after Ruth Bader Ginsburg prevailed in her case before the Supreme Court, *Reed v. Reed*, a 1971 case that extended application of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to women. Justice Ginsburg acknowledged that her arguments in the case were based on Murray’s writings and cited Murray as coauthor on the brief, saying, “we knew that we were standing on [Pauli Murray’s] shoulders”—and therefore, implicitly, on Blanche Crozier’s as well.

Blanche Crozier’s story is just one of countless examples of the monumental influence that our alumni have had on law and society. They have argued some of the nation’s most consequential cases. They have advanced the cause of civil rights and equal justice. They have fueled innovation in industries from mass media to technology to healthcare. They have fundamentally reshaped our nation’s understanding of the law, and in some cases, literally changed the course of history.

One of the alumni we often count among our “firsts” is Clarence Jones, from the Class of 1959, the first African American to become an allied member of the New York Stock Exchange, which is certainly an accomplishment worth celebrating. But there is so much more to his story.

A trusted adviser to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also an alumnus of Boston University (School of Theology), Jones is reportedly one of two people whom Dr. King spoke with nearly every day during the years he was most active in the fight for civil rights. When Dr. King was arrested in April 1963, it was Jones who smuggled notes from Dr. King’s jail cell to release them publicly as the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” which would become one of the seminal texts of the Civil Rights Movement. And, when Dr. King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to declare the iconic words, “I Have A Dream” in 1963, he spoke from a document that had been prepared by Clarence Jones.

It is due in large part to the leadership and tenacity of our alumni that women won the right to vote. It is due to our alumni that grand juries cannot exclude members of a defendant’s race and that race-based peremptory challenges in jury selection were ruled unconstitutional. It is because of BU Law alumni that our environment is protected by legislation like the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, and that our nation’s public schools must serve all students with disabilities.

Our alumni have recovered nearly \$15 billion for victims of Bernie Madoff’s Ponzi scheme and more than \$800 million in damages for more than 10,000 first responders exposed to toxins and contaminants in the aftermath of 9/11. Our

alumni even played a pivotal role in shaping arguments that ultimately led the Supreme Court to rule in George W. Bush's favor after the contested presidential election of 2000, a decision that undoubtedly altered the course of history, regardless of one's politics.

Indeed, it is difficult to overstate the enormous impact that Boston University School of Law's faculty and alumni have made on law and society over the course of 150 years. And considering our 25,000 alumni living in all U.S. states and territories and in one hundred countries around the world, one can only imagine the stories we've yet to uncover.

Today, Boston University honored two other members of our alumni community at the 74th Best of BU Alumni Awards. Retired Lieutenant Colonel Enoch Woodhouse, from our Class of 1955, is one of the original and last surviving Tuskegee Airmen. A native of Boston's Mission Hill neighborhood, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1944 and was commissioned as a finance officer for the Tuskegee Airmen, the noted group that played a pivotal role in the early integration of the U.S. Armed Forces. After leaving active duty, Woodhouse joined the Air Force Reserve and went on to earn an undergraduate degree from Yale University in 1952 and a degree from BU Law in 1955. He worked as a trial lawyer in private practice in Boston and as an attorney in the U.S. State Department and for the City of Boston for more than forty years.

Our University also honored Howard Moore, Jr., from our Class of 1960. Howard Moore is a prominent civil rights attorney originally from Atlanta, Georgia. In the 1960s and 1970s, he handled a number of key cases that set vital precedents for freedom of speech and civil rights. Moore's legal cases include *City of Greenwood v. Peacock* and *Georgia v. Rachel*, Supreme Court victories in 1966 that used federal civil action to counter unconstitutional attempts to use state law to prevent citizens from exercising their rights. In the 1970s, Moore also successfully defended political activist and academic Angela Davis, a prominent face in the Black Power Movement, against charges of conspiracy, kidnapping, and murder.

Please join me in congratulating these two incredible gentlemen for being honored among the Best of BU Alumni.

As I look around this room, and particularly as I look out at the many current students who have joined us for tonight's celebration, I am remarkably optimistic about our future. When I think about all that our BU Law community has contributed to the world, and when I consider how much the world has changed over the past 150 years, I cannot contemplate what a future dean might say at our 300th anniversary celebration in 2172. What might that future dean recall about one of our students or alumni here tonight? What might that dean assert about how those BU Law alumni defended what was right, stood up for the marginalized, advanced the cause of justice, or created an innovation that changed the world? It is up to you to write that next chapter in our history, and given the trajectory of our BU Law community over the past 150 years, I have no doubt those stories and impacts will be absolutely incredible.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Platinum Sponsor for this evening's celebration, Western Carriers, and its President, Gerry Cohen. Gerry is a prolific philanthropist who supports many nonprofit organizations in the Boston area, including BU Law. An award in his name is given annually to a member of our administrative staff who goes above and beyond to support the law school. Gerry has also co-chaired the BU Law Fund, he serves as a lifetime member of the executive committee for BU Law's Alumni Association, and he has provided a matching challenge grant for the 3L class gift for nearly twenty years. On behalf of everyone at BU Law, I am incredibly grateful to Gerry for his longstanding support of our BU Law community and to Western Carriers for their generous sponsorship of our 150th Anniversary Gala.

Now, I am delighted to introduce Imara Joroff, from our Class of 2024, the President of BU Law's Student Government Association.