

THE COLOR OF ACHIEVEMENT

Traditional candle-lighting ceremony



Students of Color Dinner honors grads-to-be and community leaders

Lifting as We Climb” was the theme for the 19th annual Students of Color Dinner, and with everything from music to dance to candle-light, the event lifted spirits as well as aspirations.

The dinner, held in the Buffalo Niagara Marriott, celebrates the achievements of the Law School’s minority students and honors the work of community leaders. It is hosted jointly by the Black Law Students Association, the Latin American Law Students Association and the Asian American Law Students Association.

Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, in his first Law School-related appearance, gave opening remarks in which he encouraged the graduating students to consider staying in Buffalo as they be-



Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown and Vice Dean Ilene R. Fleischmann

gin their professional lives. “There is opportunity in this community,” he said, citing economic development projects totaling more than \$4.5 billion that have been announced in the past few years.



Hon. Samuel L. Green '67 addressed the students



Jodi-Kay E. Williams '09 and Yelenis Rodriguez, winner of the Monique E. Emdin scholarship

“You will pass your bar exam, but what you will have to decide is where you will make your future and where you will give back,” the mayor said. “All of you graduating law students have a wonderful opportunity. You will have the opportunity to give something back to some community. It is my hope as mayor that you will use your talent, your legal education, your ability and your creativity and consider accepting a position in the City of Buffalo.”

After dinner – and a spirited dance routine by members of UB’s Latin American Students Association – the students heard from Hon. Samuel L. Green '67, senior associate justice of



Dancers from UB's Latin American Students Association

the State Supreme Court’s Appellate Division, 4th Department.

Green began by reflecting on his own Law School days, when he was one of only two students of color in his class and the school was located in downtown Buffalo.

“You could go across the street and watch some great trials,” he said. “One thing about the practice of law in those days was that it was a real profession. However, with changes in the law and the advertising that goes on today, the law has become more of a business. It is more about the bottom line and who can make the most money.

“Still, as lawyers of color, we must be forever vigilant to protect the rights

of the poor and disadvantaged. Sure, we can make money and be successful, but we have a duty to see that the rights of the poor and disadvantaged are taken care of.”

The jurist went on to sketch out some lingering societal problems that he said lawyers have a duty to address, including:

- Inequalities in education that disproportionately affect people of color.
- Sentencing disparities in drug crimes, such as lesser sentences for powder cocaine than for crack cocaine, which is more prevalent in the black community.
- The United States’ expanding jail population; 1 in 9 blacks, and 1 in 36 Hispanics, are in prison, Green said.
- The government’s use of waterboarding as a tool of interrogation.
- The rising number of home foreclosures.

“As you go out,” Green said, “especially those of you who are graduating, do not forget those you are leaving behind. You can help by mentoring; you can also help by sending back some funds every now and then.”

Organizers also presented Distinguished Alumni Awards to H. Todd Bullard '87, a partner in the Rochester law firm Harris Beech, and Hon. Betty Calvo-Torres '98, a Buffalo City Court judge, as well as the Trailblazer Award to John M. Staley, assistant vice provost for faculty affairs at UB, and the Jacob B. Hyman Professor of the Year Award to Professor Susan Vivian Mangold.

After the graduating law students were recognized individually, the dinner concluded with the groups’ traditional “passing the light” candle-lighting ceremony, to the sounds of *The Prayer* sung by Louise Calixte '09.

Co-chairs for the Students of Color Dinner were Janelle L. Whitaker '08 and Shereefat Balogun '09.