

From the Editors

We are proud to publish the first all-fiction issue of the *Journal of Legal Education*. Our judges, all published fiction writers, were quite impressed with the quality of the submissions, and among their selections were law professors—including the winner, Professor Steven Semeraro of Thomas Jefferson School of Law, practicing lawyers, professional writers, and even a law student at the University of Virginia.

The idea for the short story competition and issue of the *JLE* came from a mixture of inspiration and exasperation. We know that many lawyers have become notable fiction writers, that legal themes and institutions are central to popular culture in the United States, and that fiction may communicate insights that are useful in teaching and learning. It is also fair to admit that our collective enthusiasm for the idea, which originated with Associate Editor Molly Selvin and Marshall Goldberg, one of our judges, came from fatigue resulting from overexposure to the wooden writing of academics too often evident in submissions to the *JLE* and, for example, the almost ritual recitals of the themes of the Carnegie Report, *Educating Lawyers*, as if—six years later—they were new to our readers.

Professor Alexandra D'Italia, a fiction writer and one of the gems of the legal writing program at Southwestern took the lead in helping us organize the submissions and prepare the winners for publication in the *JLE*. She also guided the illuminating conversation among our panel of all-star judges, also published in this issue. The judges—Michael Connelly, Marshall Goldberg, Denise Hamilton, and Charles Rosenberg—include some of the most notable writers of fiction with legal themes.

Given the location of the *JLE* at Southwestern Law School, in the historic art deco Bullocks Wilshire building in Los Angeles, it is fitting that one of the judges is Michael Connelly, who created a character nicknamed Bullocks in *The Fifth Witness*, part of the “Lincoln Lawyer” series. Her professional persona is one that many Southwestern graduates can identify with and perhaps use as a source of inspiration for their own careers.

We will not try to summarize the stories here. They are fun to read and an engaging break from our normal production. Some of the themes that recur in submissions to the *JLE* shine through in these stories, such as the role of narrative in teaching the law and professional responsibility, and the Carnegie-inspired focus on the development of a professional identity. Professor D'Italia describes many of the stories as “coming of age,” and indeed they may succeed better than non-fiction description in revealing the ideals, compromises, challenges, rewards, and disappointments that go with the roles of law student, litigator, prosecutor, judge and law professor. Last, we should not forget what

fiction writing means to those who play one of these legal roles in “real life.” As our winner Professor Semeraro noted about his venture into fiction, “attorneys are always performing for judges, juries, clients, and students. The legal fiction writing contest is a welcome chance for us to get off the stage for a while and create the characters that we wish we could be.”

We thank Professor D’Italia for her tremendous help with this issue. We thank our judges, who committed many hours to reading and evaluating the submissions. And we thank those who submitted so many inspiring and fascinating stories to this competition. As always, but especially given this unique issue, we welcome comments and ideas on the *JLE*.

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