

ROUNDTABLE ON INTERSECTIONALITY AND STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES IN LEADERSHIP*

FOURTH NATIONAL PEOPLE OF COLOR LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP CONFERENCE (NPOC 2019).....	51
REFLECTIONS ON ELEVEN YEARS AS A LATINA DEAN (EMPHASIS ADDED)...	58
A. “It’s (Still) Lonely at the Top”	59
B. My “Latina” Voice is My Superpower	61
C. Leading With Optimism	62
Conclusion.....	63
“WHY NOT ME?”: INTERSECTIONALITY IN LAW SCHOOL LEADERSHIP.....	65

FOURTH NATIONAL PEOPLE OF COLOR LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP CONFERENCE (NPOC 2019)

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I am Maria Isabel Medina, Ferris Family Distinguished Professor of Law at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, and I am delighted to have organized, with Sudha Setty, this panel featuring a powerhouse of talented leaders.

Every law professor is a leader. We get up in a classroom several times a week and lead a class. For some of our students we are and may remain a powerful source of inspiration. Some of us are activists in the profession; some of us emerge as leaders through our writings. Some of us function in other leadership roles that do not directly engage administration; some of us have served as chairs of our University Faculty bodies or as chairs of key University or law school committees.

Every person in this room is a powerhouse of leadership. Today, joining me at this table are a handful of the talented women of color leading law schools today. Our goals are to inspire and empower others. We acknowledge the challenges that face any leader of a legal institution today but focus on the particular challenges raised by intersectionality. Race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, age, language—these are traits that evoke deeply stereotypical responses in others, responses that tend to blind us to the uniquely unique individual actually before us.

I have attended several leadership conferences or trainings in the past year, all of them excellent: one put together by legal academics specifically for women; another organized by legal academics, including academics who are persons of color, specifically designed to encourage or inform persons of color interested in formal leadership opportunities, principally deaning; and another a more corporate-type workshop designed to improve leadership and managerial

* This article features brief essays by a selection of speakers from the *Roundtable on Intersectionality* panel of the Fourth National People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference (NPOC 2019).

¹ Thanks to all panelists. Thanks as well to Catherine E. Smith, Associate Dean of Institutional Diversity and Inclusiveness, University of Denver School of Law, and to Laura Padilla, Professor, California Western School of Law for assistance in compiling a current list of women of color law deans in the United States and Puerto Rico. Dean Emeritus Jim Rosenblatt also maintains a dean’s database that tracks law school deans. For the full list, see Jim Rosenblatt, *Rosenblatt’s Deans Database*, MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE SCHOOL OF LAW, <https://law.mc.edu/deans/> [<https://perma.cc/ANQ2-SP49>].

effectiveness as well as develop what I have come to appreciate as institution-building. All of the workshops were excellent. All of them left me wanting to hear more from women of color who had stepped up to the leadership plate. Sudha Setty, it turned out, was thinking along similar lines. Dean Setty and I joined forces. Please join me in welcoming Raquel Aldana, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Diversity and Professor of Law at UC Davis School of Law; Danielle M. Conway, Dean and Professor of Law at the University of Maine School of Law, soon to commence as Dean and Donald J. Farage Professor of Law at Penn State University Dickinson Law School; Camille Nelson, Dean at American University Washington College of Law and Former Dean at Suffolk University School of Law; Elena Maria Marty-Nelson, Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion and Public Impact and Professor of Law at Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad College of Law; Angela Onwuachi-Willig, Dean at Boston University School of Law; Jennifer Rosato Perea, Dean at Depaul University College of Law and former Dean at Northern Illinois University College of Law; Huyen Pham, Professor at Texas A&M University School of Law and former Associate Dean for Faculty Research and Development, Texas Wesleyan University School of Law and Texas A&M University School of Law; and Sudha Setty, Dean at Western New England School of Law.

In preparation for the discussion, we identified a number of questions that might be addressed. Some of the questions are of the type frequently addressed in traditional law leadership conferences: questions as to skills that have proved essential or helpful in attaining or maintaining one's position as leader; questions as to the pathways to and motivations for leadership or administrative work; questions that explore effective leadership training as well as the role of mentors.

Panelists were also asked to reflect on the extent to which intersectionality affects their leadership role with regard to diversity in the various law school or university constituents—students, faculty staff and alumni. The ultimate question for our panelists was, “given the costs for persons of color, and in particular women of color, do you feel empowered to support diversity initiatives?”

At the conference I attended put together by corporate consultants aimed at institution building and leadership effectiveness, the virtues of cultivating a dissenting culture were emphasized. I have served under ten deans at my own institution and observed at least three deans in other institutions as a visiting professor, and I'm not sure any of them valued a dissenting culture. What were the panelists' thoughts about the idea of a “dissenting culture?” What are effective ways to engage with dissenting voices? Do law deans in general value or encourage a dissenting culture? Does dissent pose a challenge to women of color leaders that men in general and white men in particular do not face?

How does age intersect with race and gender? Age and experience are related. Unquestionably they tend to act as positives for men, although it is less easy to judge this factor with regard to men of color, but for women age does not wear easily. One of the most successful deans to date at my institution was an older person who was both white and male—would faculties be as receptive to older persons or women of color?

Time did not allow us to even begin to explore all of these issues. We were delighted to be selected by the University of Pennsylvania Journal of Law and Social Change for publication, but after consideration and discussion decided as a group that we would prefer to submit brief essays for publication, rather than publish the panel reflections. I have opted to merge the two to give readers a sense of how the panel proceeded, share my introductory remarks and offer brief exploration of the various issues that generated the push to submit this panel to the organizers of NPOC 2019. In preparation for the panel I did some preliminary research to identify the literature

that has emerged exploring law school administrators.² In particular, I was interested in literature addressing intersectionality or the emergence of women, in particular women of color, as deans.³ This panel's reflections contribute to that literature.

There are 203 ABA-accredited law schools in the United States, including Puerto Rico's law school.⁴ Sixteen of those law schools are headed by women of color—that's roughly seven percent of law schools. Should that figure surprise us in 2019? If we include all women deans, the percentage rises dramatically to thirty five percent. If we look at color alone and eliminate gender, it drops down to approximately sixteen percent. I am conscious of the inherent limitations in looking at race and gender alone in exploring questions of leadership and leadership effectiveness. Herman Hill Kay's 2002 essay on women law deans, discussing the University of Toledo Law School's annual symposium on leadership in legal education, concluded that "neither the content nor the style of these essays suggests that deaning is experienced differently by men and women."⁵ As Kay's essay noted, however, only ten out of ninety-eight essays in the Toledo symposia had been authored by women.⁶ Almost certainly, the experience of women deans is bound to be different to some extent, and women deans are likely to face challenges unfaced by men. For example, women deans may face challenges in dining with potential donors that men are unlikely to face.⁷ Women deans

² See generally, e.g., Peter C. Alexander, *Law School Deans and "The New Normal,"* 46 U. TOL. L. REV. 251 (2015); Janice C. Griffith, *The Dean's Role as a Member of the University's Central Administration,* 35 U. TOL. L. REV. 79 (2003); Kevin R. Johnson, *The Forgotten Constituency? Law School Deans and Students,* 42 U. TOL. L. REV. 637 (2011); R. Lawrence Dessem, *Top Ten Reasons to be a Law School Dean,* 33 U. TOL. L. REV. 19 (2001).

³ See generally, e.g., PRESUMED INCOMPETENT: THE INTERSECTIONS OF RACE AND CLASS FOR WOMEN IN ACADEMIA (Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. eds., 2012); MEERA E. DEO, UNEQUAL PROFESSION: RACE AND GENDER IN LEGAL ACADEMIA (2019); Camille deJorna, *Deaning in a Different Voice: Not the Same Old Song,* 48 VAL. U. L. REV. 645 (2014); Kevin R. Johnson, *The Importance of Student and Faculty Diversity in Law Schools: One Dean's Perspective,* 96 IOWA L. REV. 1549 (2011); Herma Hill Kay, *Women Law School Deans: A Different Breed, Or Just One of the Boys?*, 14 YALE J.L. & FEMINISM 219 (2002); Michele Benedetto Neitz, *Pulling Back the Curtain: Implicit Bias in the Law School Dean Search Process* 49 SETON HALL L. REV. 629 (2019); Laura M. Padilla, *A Gendered Update on Women Law Deans: Who, Where, Why, and Why Not?*, 15 AM. U. J. GENDER SOC. POL'Y & L. 443 (2007); LeRoy Pernell, *Deans of Color Speak Out: Unique Voice in a Unique Role,* 20 B.C. THIRD WORLD L.J. 43 (2000); Kamille Wolff, *From Pipeline to Pipe Dream: The HBCU Effect on Law School Deans of Color,* 14 J. GENDER RACE & JUST. 765 (2011).

⁴ List of ABA-Approved Law Schools, ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, available at https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/aba_approved_law_schools/ [https://perma.cc/C4P7-6QHJ].

One of the law schools, UNT Dallas College of Law, is provisionally approved. Three—Arizona Summit Law School, Atlanta's John Marshall Law School, and Thomas Jefferson School of Law—are listed as on probation, but Arizona Summit is scheduled to close by the end of Spring 2020. See Stephanie Ward, *Arizona Summit Law School Agrees to Drop Its Lawsuit Against ABA,* ABA JOURNAL (Jan. 16, 2019), available at http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/Arizona_Summit_InfiLaw_lawsuit_ABA/ [https://perma.cc/4YRY-U4H5].

⁵ Kay, *supra* note 3, at 236. Kay recognized later in the essay that it was too early to evaluate the role of gender in law leadership and that some of the women deans noted that their gender had an impact on their deanship. *Id.* at 237; see Colleen A. Khoury, *Ruminations on a Deanship,* 34 U. TOL. L. REV. 105 (2002). As Kay's essay noted, only ten out of ninety-eight essays in the Toledo symposia had been authored by women.

⁶ Kay, *supra* note 3, at 236.

⁷ Olga Khazan, *How Pence's Dudes Dinners Hurt Women,* ATLANTIC (Mar. 30, 2017), <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/03/pences-gender-segregated-dinners/521286/> [https://perma.cc/9ZFT-2X7M].

who are pregnant are likely to face challenges not faced by men.

All of the leadership conferences I attended emphasized and acknowledged the challenges facing law schools and law school leaders today. Those challenges include enrollment trends;⁸ polarized political communities; the viability of shared governance principles in an increasingly corporatized institutional climate; the viability of a tenure system as the primary law faculty; the increased costs of legal education and the shifting financial relationships between law schools and their home institutions; and the challenges posed by technology, not just in terms of the substantial costs of maintaining cutting edge technology and educating students in their use, but also in the ways that artificial intelligence is changing the nature of law practice and access to legal services and the need for legal professionals to participate at the design stage rather than when the technology is available.

I come at the question of leadership not from the perspective of an administrative leader, but as a member of one of the constituencies with whom deans most interact—law faculties. That perspective has led me to form criteria for measuring leadership effectiveness, as well as when selecting new leadership. Much of the literature echoes these criteria and expectations and they include a capacity for innovation, collaboration, transparency, management and decision-making. The most successful deans I have observed prioritized showcasing their institutions and their faculty, rather than themselves. At one of the other panels at this conference, I heard Dean Emerita Rachel Moran speak to the dean's role as the “face of the institution”⁹ and the difficulties in controlling the narrative of one's identity once one is in a leadership role. Another experienced leader on the panel spoke to the almost necessary practice of “giving away credit” as opposed to taking credit for good things that happen. As still another experienced leader on that panel pointed out, deans do not have academic freedom in the same way faculty enjoy; deans are aligned with power, and this can be a difficult transition for faculty, accustomed to faculty leadership roles in which academic freedom principles play a significant role, to make. I started out this essay by emphasizing the commonality of leadership in academia, but further exploration of the ways in which leadership is practiced or expressed depending upon the role and status of the academic is plainly necessary to understand and better describe the qualities that make one an effective leader.

For most of us, leadership roles are more readily available at our home institutions through service on faculty senates or key institutional committees. These types of leadership roles may not bring additional compensation, but they are rewarding in other ways that may make them worthwhile to pursue. I want to share my perspective on leadership roles in the academy that do not involve formal administration, as a former chair of the University Senate, as a current chair of the institutional committee that negotiates on behalf of faculty changes to the Faculty Handbook, a document that sets forth faculty rights, responsibilities and protections and that is expressly made part of the contractual arrangements between the University and the faculty, in particular, faculty in tenure track or tenure lines. I venture these thoughts fully aware of the dramatic changes in the

⁸ 2018–2019 enrollment numbers improved. Paul Caron, *Testy: The Quantity and Quality of Law School Applicants: 2018 edition*, TAX PROFESSOR BLOG (Sept. 7, 2018), https://taxprof.typepad.com/taxprof_blog/2018/09/testy-the-quantity-and-quality-of-law-school-applicants-2018-edition.html [<https://perma.cc/UV3C-HZJU>]. Long term enrollment trends, however, suggest that law schools are unlikely to experience the applicant numbers of the first decade of the 21st century.

⁹ Symposium, *Fourth National People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference, People of Color and The Future of Democracy*: Panel 6G: Administrative Service, *The Pros and Cons of Becoming and Administrator*, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW (Mar. 23, 2019).

academy, not just the legal academy, with regards faculty, shared governance principles, and the rise in contract or contingent faculty.

Intersectionality has definitely impacted my ability to play leadership roles in my institution, both in positive ways and more challenging ways. As someone who was brought into the faculty in response to student demand for more women and specifically a latinx or Hispanic faculty, at a time when there were very few women and no Hispanics on the tenured/tenure track faculty, and at a time when it was lawful to do so, it was inescapable to have one's gender, racial or ethnic identity noted. Like Dean Emerita Moran, I found it difficult to control the narrative of my identity. I joined the law faculty as the fourth woman on the tenure track in a faculty that numbered approximately thirty (about the size we are today). There were no Hispanics, and in a city located in the deep south where African Americans were a majority, the only African American with a tenured position on the faculty was the dean. The year I joined, the faculty added two other African Americans, but it was primarily an overwhelmingly white and male faculty. Whatever identity I brought to teaching, scholarship and service work, the kind of work that this reflection addresses, was affected by how others perceived me. Whether or not my opinion on a particular subject matter differed from that of my colleagues or not, the simple fact of my difference from the norm, meant sometimes people were more open to my participation; at the same time, my view might be relegated to a "representative" view, in terms of my racial and gender identity. Resistance to stated views, moreover, might more easily be generated in response to a woman who is a Latina. One's gender and racial identity is a central part of one's identity but race and gender are not the only aspects of one's identity and perhaps not even the most defining. Other traits or experiences may in fact have had more impact on our formation than race and gender. In my case, I was forced to leave my country of birth while still young; I am a citizen of the United States but I was not born in the United States and my parents were not from the United States. The experience of being forced to leave one's native country, and learn a new life in another has had a substantial impact on my identity. In fact, it is part of the intersectionality puzzle that informs my own personal identity. There are other aspects of my experience that, again, may have played dominant roles in the formation of my identity. It is impossible to completely separate and quantify the varied, unique strands that constitute the essence of an individual.

But others reject that perspective and they may see or reduce one to the singularity of those traits.¹⁰ This is the essence of racism but it is also a rather typical response to individuals. Faculty who accept significant leadership roles in their institution will have to navigate these realities in the same way as deans and associate deans, but with the added advantage that this type of leadership role does not require that the individual align with the administration necessarily, and allow the faculty member to act as a spokesperson for views that may, in fact, not be aligned with those of administrators. This poses even greater challenges when those administrators are women of color. There may be expectations of unqualified support. Caucasian men are used to dealing with issues with other Caucasian men; few would expect support on issues because of their racial and gender identity. The same may not be true for women whether Caucasian or of other racial and ethnic identities.

Paradoxically, women of color playing non-administrative leadership roles may find themselves somewhat isolated at times; navigating institutional communities may earn one respect but not always friendship. Recently, a fellow colleague at my institution but in a different college

¹⁰ Relatively recently I had an administrator respond to a concern I expressed, "But we consulted the other Latina on the faculty and she said there was no problem."

who has played a similar faculty leadership role reached out to me in friendship. Taking on an institutional leadership role often demands substantial amounts of time and effort, making it difficult to devote time to building friendships but one will become a stronger, more effective leader if one is able to do so. In this sense, institutional faculty leadership roles exact a toll similar to that borne by formal administrative leaders. Leadership offers great rewards, and none as enjoyable as earned when one is successful at negotiating difficult issues that have proved divisive between the administration and faculty. But there is a cost to serving in, for the most part, uncompensated leadership roles, and it is similar to the costs that deans, associate deans and other formal academic administrative leaders bear.

Intersectionality, however, does not make one necessarily a good or effective leader. This statement is almost too obvious to express; it bears restating that other qualities and character traits may be more integral to effective leadership than one's gender and one's racial or other identity. Integrity, intelligence, openness, vision, and the ability to actualize vision and inspire others to follow that vision, are more important traits to effective leadership than gender or race. Gender and race may mean that one will be evaluated by higher, tougher standards than those applied to male colleagues, and this I am committed to opposing.

Faculty leadership affords opportunities for success and failure; but failure at faculty leadership roles is easier to navigate than failure in formal administrative roles. Thus, these opportunities offer professional growth and challenge, as well as ease in transitioning back into a full instructional role. Working on a set of challenges or problems and engaging with scholars, administrators, students and staff on generating solutions is a wonderfully fulfilling activity. The kind of faculty that are attracted to these roles tend to be engaged and engaging—they may not agree easily as to how to solve a problem, but they are working on the solution. It is difficult not to be engaged oneself, when one is surrounded by active intellectual engagement. Failure, however, is as likely as success and one has to develop the ability to deal with setbacks.

I turned to faculty leadership roles because they presented different challenges, offered opportunities to develop in different directions, and proved to be enjoyable. Institutional faculty leadership roles allow for interdisciplinary and cross-discipline engagement and interactions. This is the aspect of institutional leadership that I found most enjoyable, and it has tended to be the reason why I continue to be drawn to them.

As a member of my faculty, and in my institutional role as a faculty leader, I have initiated, developed and provided support for diversity initiatives to the extent I have been in a position to make a difference. It is perhaps easier to advocate for and express a commitment to diversity throughout the institution as a faculty leader, than as an administrator that has a more pronounced responsibility to adopt or defend the institutional policy. At the same time, faculty leaders are limited in the extent to which they can actually formulate and implement policy. Our faculty voice, nonetheless, matters and can impact the decision-making of deans and associate deans in meaningful ways. Moreover, faculty leaders function not only to help decide issues, necessarily, but to air them. In this context, simply voicing the faculty concerns in effective ways signals success.

Faculty leaders play a unique role in shared governance of institutions of higher learning. They are an integral and indispensable part of the institutional decision-making framework, with an essential role to play as visionaries, experts in their respective fields and in higher education, and in providing oversight on other institutional actors, including administrators and boards. Intersectionality creates added challenges, but those of us who have navigated successfully to positions of faculty leadership have managed to turn potential liabilities into assets. Filling these

types of roles allows us to continue to enjoy teaching and scholarship, while developing personally and professionally a different set of skills in service to the institution.

I turn to our panelists now, who inform their perspectives as experienced administrative leaders.

REFLECTIONS ON ELEVEN YEARS AS A LATINA DEAN (EMPHASIS ADDED)

JENNIFER ROSATO PEREA¹¹

In August 2006, I became a law school dean for the first time.¹² Since then, I have served as a law dean for a total of eleven years at three different law schools. As I begin my twelfth year, I find myself as one of the longest-serving deans in the country: in the top twenty out of approximately 200,¹³ and serving significantly longer than the average term for law deans (3.74 years).¹⁴

But I am not just one of the most experienced deans. Back in 2006, I was the first Latina¹⁵ law dean in the country when I was appointed acting dean at a brand new law school in Philadelphia during its first year of operation. And fast forward to 2019, I believe that I am one of only three Latina deans in the country.¹⁶

For most of this time I have felt like a “reluctant pioneer,”¹⁷ wanting to deny my existence as a first/only/token/oddy/exotic/unicorn. I have just wanted to be a good dean with a life-long passion to help make law schools and legal education better. Yet, as the years go by, I have recognized that it is being a “Latina” dean that provides me with the unique perspective I bring to every decision I make, meeting I attend, initiative I lead, speech I give, or hire I authorize.¹⁸ I now

¹¹ Dean and Professor of Law, DePaul University College of Law. Gratitude to my research assistant Gabriela Illa, and reference librarian Anne Hudson for their great research and editing. And to my mom and dad, husband, and daughter, for their unconditional love and acceptance of my authentic self.

¹² Laura Padilla, *A Gendered Update on Women Law Deans: Who, Where, Why and Why Not?*, 15 AM. U. J. GENDER SOC. POL’Y & LAW 443 n.80 (2007). I served as Acting Dean at Drexel University School of Law from 2006–2007, then returned to my role as Dean of Student Affairs for the next two academic years, before obtaining my next deanship at Northern Illinois. See Jill L. Cruz & Melinda S. Molina, *Hispanic National Bar Association National Study on the Status of Latinas in the Legal Profession – Few and Far Between: The Reality of Latina Lawyers*, 37 PEPPERDINE L. REV. 971, 1002 n.80 (2010).

¹³ See *Length of Cumulative Service—Current Deans*, MC LAW: ROSENBLATT’S DEAN DATABASE, <https://law.mc.edu/deans/> [<https://perma.cc/WVD7-5A9E>].

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ I understand that there is an ongoing discourse as to whether to use the term Latinx, Latin@, Latina/Latino, or Hispanic. See generally ED MORALES, *LATINX: THE NEW FORCE IN AMERICAN POLITICS* (2018); Cristobal Salinas Jr., *Mapping and recontextualizing the evolution of the term Latinx: An environmental scanning in higher education*, J. LATINOS AND EDUC. (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2017.1390464> [<https://perma.cc/PVB6-QD9X>]; Rachel Hatzipanagos, ‘*Latinx: An Offense to the Spanish Language or a Nod to Inclusion?*’ WASH. POST (Sept. 14, 2018), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/09/14/latinx-an-offense-to-the-spanish-language-or-a-nod-to-inclusion/> [<https://perma.cc/W9GU-YRVM>]. I will use the term “Latina” primarily throughout as it best reflects my own intersectional identity (and my generation). Generally, it is important to recognize the intersectionality of gender, race, and class. See María Chávez, EVERYDAY INJUSTICE: LATINO PROFESSIONALS AND RACISM (2011). See generally Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, 1989 U. Chi. Legal F. 139 (1989).

¹⁶ The other two Latina deans are Leticia Diaz at Barry University School of Law and Jennifer Martinez at Stanford Law School. *Leticia M. Diaz*, BARRY UNIVERSITY, <https://www.barry.edu/law/future-students/faculty/staff/leticia-diaz.html> [<https://perma.cc/4R6W-26FK>]; *Jenny S. Martinez*, STANFORD UNIVERSITY, <https://law.stanford.edu/directory/jenny-s-martinez/> [<https://perma.cc/BVL9-DYME>].

¹⁷ Jennifer L. Rosato, *Reflections of a Reluctant Pioneer*, 48 Cal. W. L. Rev. 445 (2012).

¹⁸ There are also other aspects of my identity that shape my perspective—first generation/lower middle

embrace that perspective.

For this essay, I will reflect on how I seek to help train the next truly diverse generation of lawyers—with more humility, passion, focus, and maturity than I had thirteen years ago—and in a way that is authentically grounded in my background and experiences. These thematic reflections are: “It’s (Still) Lonely at the Top”; “My ‘Latina’ Voice is My Superpower”; and “Leading With Optimism.”

A. “It’s (Still) Lonely at the Top”

Being one of only a few Latina deans in 2019 is disappointing but not surprising. Although Latinx students comprise roughly **14%** of the law student population, Latinx lawyers comprise only **6%** of all lawyers;¹⁹ roughly **2.5%** of associates; and **less than one percent** of partners at law firms. Latina lawyers still only constitute **1.7%** of all lawyers.²⁰

What this statistic translates into on a daily basis is that—for a Latina leader in law—many times you are still the only one like you in the room.²¹ There is still a dearth of mentors who share your experiences and who you can trust to confide in or who can give you a needed reality check (to affirm “yes, that person was undermining you” or “no, that person does not talk to the white male deans that way”). Although the leadership ranks are diversifying slowly, there are still few people at your level who “get you.” So first, isolation means feeling lonely more often than not.

Second, the isolation also allows slights to be made and go unchecked. They are minor but still occur with some frequency. When my last name is mispronounced, my appearance is commented on, or I am lectured about how to solve a problem as if I had started deaning yesterday—in the past I often just smiled, ignored the slight, and moved on to the problem that needed solving. Confronting these slights on my own has seemed daunting and not worth the effort.

Third, the isolation also feels like added pressure to represent “my people” every day, rather than being evaluated by my own individual strengths and weaknesses. I am conscious of not creating a negative impression about Latina leaders in what I do and say, as it not only will affect how people think of me, but also what they think of other Latina leaders in the future. For example, I am conscious about how I dress each morning, making sure that I do not dress “too Latina”²² (daily

class/mother/heterosexual—but none have been as influential as the combination of my gender and ethnicity.

¹⁹ See Law School Admission Council, Inc., *Diversity in the US Population and the Pipeline to Legal Careers*, LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION COUNCIL, INC., <https://www.lsac.org/data-research/data/diversity-us-population-pipeline-legal-careers> [https://perma.cc/YE44-LMGL].

²⁰ *2018 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms*, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LAW PLACEMENT, INC. (Jan. 2019), https://www.nalp.org/uploads/2018NALPReportonDiversityinUSLawFirms_FINAL.pdf [https://perma.cc/9FJL-ZAWY]. Note: these percentages are specific to law firms that have 701+ lawyers (n = 482). As such, they qualify as “big” law firms. Judges and general counsels of color remain a small number as well. As of July 1, 2019, nearly 7% of federal judges identified as Hispanic. American Bar Association, *ABA Profile of the Legal Profession*, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION 37 (2019), <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/news/2019/08/ProfileOfProfession-total-hi.pdf> [https://perma.cc/QW4Y-3XTM]. In 2019, women made up 30% of general counsels in fortune 500 companies; however, less than one in five identify as minorities. *Id.* at 49.

²¹ See Chávez, *supra* note 15, at 97–100.

²² See Cruz & Molina, *supra* note 12, at 1019 (“They [Latinas in study] also believe that they have to dress more conservatively and professionally than their White counterparts, such as ‘not wearing open-toed shoes’ or needing to ‘straighten their hair’ to avoid being sexualized or subject to ethnic stereotypes such as the ‘fiery Latina’”); see generally

checklist: are my heels too high, my dress too tight, my cleavage showing, or my nails or lipstick too bright?). I am conscious of my tone in every interaction (not too edgy, not too emotional). Although this self-monitoring is still commonplace for women leaders,²³ it is exacerbated by not wanting to reinforce negative stereotypes of Latinas as too emotional, too angry, or too sexy²⁴—all variations of the “fiery Latina.”²⁵ I am also aware of not doing too much office “housework” (e.g., planning events, bringing food, cleaning up)²⁶ to avoid being too easily relegated to a Latina “maid”²⁷ or “mama”²⁸ stereotype.

This type of experience was documented ten years ago in a 2009 study entitled “Few and Far Between: The Reality of Latina Lawyers.” At that time, Latinas constituted 1.3% of U.S. lawyers. The study documented the lack of role models for Latina lawyers; the isolation; the tokenism and need to represent all Latinas; the pervasive gender and cultural stereotypes, including being “too passive” or “fiery”; and the perception that Latinas are less qualified than other lawyers.²⁹

Although the experiences of Latinas may be similar to ten years ago, it feels a little more comfortable because there are a few more of us around the table and, as we gain experience, we are more willing to speak our minds even if we are the only ones in the room. The room also feels more comfortable because of the existence of a growing literature that affirms our experiences. I feel better knowing that sometimes the insecurity that I feel is called “stereotype threat,”³⁰ that the slights are called “microaggressions,”³¹ that the patronizing remarks and interruptions I experience are

MARIANA ATENCIO, *PERFECTLY YOU: EMBRACING THE POWER OF BEING REAL* (2019) (telling story of how she was asked not to look “too Latina” for the White House Correspondents’ Dinner).

²³ See discussion of the “Tightrope Bias” in AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION COMMISSION ON WOMEN IN THE PROFESSION, *infra* note 34.

²⁴ See, e.g., Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, “A Prostitute, A Servant, and a Customer-Service Representative,” in PRESUMED INCOMPETENT, *supra* note 3, at 40; AM. ASS’N OF UNIV. WOMEN, BARRIERS AND BIAS: THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP 23 (2016).

²⁵ JOAN C. WILLIAMS & RACHEL DEMPSEY, *WHAT WORKS FOR WOMEN AT WORK* 240–42 (2014).

²⁶ *Id.*; Adam Grant & Cheryl Sandberg, *Madam CEO, Get Me a Coffee*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 6, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/opinion/sunday/sheryl-sandberg-and-adam-grant-on-women-doing-office-housework.html> [<https://perma.cc/L5PZ-TJ2V>].

²⁷ See generally Ariel Nagi, *16 Stereotypes of Latinas That Need to Stop*, COSMOPOLITAN (Jan. 23, 2014), <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/celebs/advice/a5403/latina-media-stereotypes/> [<https://perma.cc/FBS8-4ZM8>] (stereotype #3: We are all maids).

²⁸ See WILLIAMS & DEMPSEY, *supra* note 25, at 240 (stating “By far the most common ‘too feminine’ problem is the pressure that Latinas feel to play the office housewife”).

²⁹ See Cruz & Molina, *supra* note 12, at 43; see also Jill Lynch Cruz, et al., *Hispanic National Bar Association Commission on the Status of Latinas in the Legal Profession: Study on Latina Attorneys in the Public Interest Sector*, 14 CUNY L. REV. 193–94 (2010) (describing similar experiences of presumed incompetence and microaggressions based on gender and ethnicity).

³⁰ Stereotype threat has been defined as “the fear of confirming a stereotype that one’s group is less able than other groups to perform a valued activity.” Rachel D. Godsil et al., *The Science of Equality Volume 1: Addressing Implicit Bias, Racial Anxiety, and Stereotype Threat in Education and Health Care* PERCEPTION INSTITUTE Nov. 2014, at 31; see generally CLAUDE STEELE, WHISTLING VIVALDI AND OTHER CLUES TO HOW STEREOTYPES AFFECT US (2010). Dr. Steele has defined stereotype threat as the “social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one’s group applies.” Claude M. Steele, *A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance*, 52 AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST 613, 614 (1997).

³¹ See DERALD WING SUE, MICROAGGRESSIONS IN EVERYDAY LIFE: RACE, GENDER, AND SEXUAL

called “prove-it-again”³² or “presumed incompetence”;³³ and that the pressure to conform to accepted behaviors for a woman leader is called “tightrope bias.”³⁴ And they all are reflections and by-products of larger institutional racism and sexism.

This identification and labeling makes me feel less alone and affirms my feelings about and reactions to the world I navigate. If I can understand what I am thinking and feeling, I can label it for what it is, put it in its place, and make a choice as to how to respond. That process, in and of itself, lessens the isolation and helps to better identify the structural/institutional barriers that would interfere with equality.

B. My “Latina” Voice is My Superpower

Recently the actress and activist America Ferrera declared in a powerful TedTalk that “My identity is my superpower.”³⁵ That theme—and her experience coming to terms with her full, authentic self as a Latina—really spoke to me. Like Ms. Ferrera, I have come to believe that my unique perspective and experience as a Latina makes me a better dean. This “full, authentic voice” is my superpower.³⁶

I feel the force of that superpower in different ways at different times. Most visibly, when I speak to a group of high school or college students (usually from underrepresented populations) about my experience growing up, they nod and smile knowingly at my story and tell me how much it means to them that I am a dean and I look like them. And the more I open up about my life, the more responsive these young women (and men) have become.

My story is my own, but has aspects that many students of color and first-generation students can relate to. I was born to a Nicaraguan mother and an Italian-American father. I often was asked to take on the role of translator/advocate for my mother and “Abuelita,” who helped care

ORIENTATION (John Wiley & Sons eds., 2010). Racial microaggressions are defined as “the everyday slights, insults, putdowns, invalidations, and offensive behaviors that people of color experience in daily interactions with generally well-intentioned White Americans who may be unaware that they have engaged in racially demeaning ways toward target groups.” See Derald Wing Sue et al., *Disarming Racial Microaggressions: Microintervention Strategies for Targets, White Allies, and Bystanders*, 74 *AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST* 128, 129 (2019).

³² Joan C. Williams et al., *You Can’t Change What You Can’t See: Interrupting Racial and Gender Bias in the Legal Profession*, Executive Summary 1 (2018). “Prove-it-Again” is the “need to provide *more* evidence of competence than majority men in order to be seen as *equally* competent.” *Id.* at 11 (emphasis in original); see also *id.* at 14–17; see also WILLIAMS & DEMPSEY, *supra* note 25, at 238–40 (interviews reveal that Latinas feel the need to prove themselves even more, because of gender and ethnicity).

³³ See generally PRESUMED INCOMPETENT, *supra* note 3. This is a phenomenon sometimes experienced by women and persons of color, in which they are perceived as less capable and competent as a white male in the same position – usually a position of leadership or power.

³⁴ See AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION COMMISSION ON WOMEN IN THE PROFESSION, *supra* note 23, at 2. “Tightrope Bias” describes the narrower range of behavior that is accepted from women and people of color, because of stereotypical expectations as to how they should behave: “Women often walk a tightrope between exhibiting the kind of behavior expected of women and the kind of behavior expected of lawyers.” *Id.* at 11.

³⁵ America Ferrera, *My identity is a superpower—not an obstacle*, TED (Apr. 2019), https://www.ted.com/talks/america_ferrera_my_identity_is_a_superpower_not_an_obstacle/up-next, [<https://perma.cc/FBS8-4ZM8>].

³⁶ *Id.*

for me and my brother while my mom worked as a bookkeeper and my dad as a steelworker. In grade school, I remember being asked “where I came from” with derisive curiosity (including having to show my classmates on a map in the front of the room). I tried to rub off my dark freckles with lemon juice during the summer when they emerged like dark constellations all over my face. Growing up, I cringed as my mother was shamed for her accent and her brownness in stores, airports, the doctor’s office, and at work.

Beyond telling my story, I have amplified my voice by mentoring students and lawyers of color, and by being actively involved in pipeline programs for underrepresented minorities at the law school and for college students. I also give presentations regularly on implicit bias and diversity and inclusion issues, and in those presentations share my values while infusing my own experiences and background.

Overall, I understand that there will be many times where my Latina voice makes a difference and my superpower will be a force for good in the universe I inhabit: it will raise an idea that no one thought of, will identify a creative way to move forward, will suggest communication that is more respectful or sensitive, or will dispel a stereotype. As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor said in a different context, “I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn’t lived that life.”³⁷

On the shadow side, my “Latina-ness” sometimes is like Kryptonite, a powerful explosive that—when it comes too close—could weaken me. As a Latina dean (or any leader of color), more is expected than just being a good dean. Like other deans of color, we are expected to protect the interests of our affinity group(s), and it never feels like enough. When we are acting as good deans—which often means trying to balance a variety of interests and solve difficult problems within confined processes—members of our affinity group(s) can express disappointment, frustration, or even a sense of betrayal when we are not more powerful advocates of the group’s views.

These are the most difficult moments that I have experienced as a dean. Over time I have defused this Kryptonite by understanding that all feelings and perspectives need to be respected and listened to, but in the end my role as dean is to reach the right decision for the right reasons, with humility and thoughtfulness. And, on balance, it is better to be working within an institution in a position of influence, even if one’s power is limited. We are called to serve as change agents in different ways—inside and outside of our institutions—and all of it matters in improving the world for people of color.

C. Leading With Optimism

All over my office suite I have signs of positivity: a “Powered by Optimism” bumper sticker on the bulletin board, cocktail table books on happiness and gratitude, and a bouquet of fresh flowers. Some days those symbols allow me to practice optimism, but most of the time they serve to reaffirm the hope that I feel about my law school, legal education, and diversity, inclusion, and equity in the legal profession.

Specifically, I am hopeful that there will be more deans of color (and women deans of

³⁷ Sonia Sotomayor, *Lecture: ‘A Latina Judge’s Voice,’* N.Y. TIMES (May 14, 2009), <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/15/us/politics/15judge.text.html> [<https://perma.cc/JFW7-9EAC>].

color) who will add to the richness of their institutions and legal education as a whole. This year, the national press took note of the increase in deans of color, with headlines such as “Incoming Batch of Law Deans is More Diverse than Ever” and “More Minority Women Ascend to Law Dean Jobs.”³⁸

I think that this trend will continue for a number of different reasons:

- The job of law school dean has changed significantly since the economic crisis and downturn in the legal market/admissions, requiring deans who have a broad skill set including emotional intelligence, grit, crisis management, strategic planning, and collaborative problem-solving. As a result, law schools need to look beyond experienced deans (most of whom are not looking for a subsequent deanship) and professors/associate deans with strong academic pedigrees. The recent hiring of a diverse cohort of deans suggests that law schools are recognizing this need, and I hope that trend will continue. We need their breadth of experience and perspectives now more than ever.
- There is more deliberate succession planning for deaning and resources for underrepresented groups to become deans, such as the Promoting Diversity in Law School Leadership Workshop, now being offered on an annual basis.
- As more diverse law deans join the ranks, they will mentor and encourage others. As we have already learned, making progress in diversity requires us to encourage and support each other, and lift each other up in myriad ways.

And as we join the ranks of law school deans in greater numbers, with our own distinctive voices, our very presence is a “debiaser” as it helps reduce the implicit bias that continues to impede diversity efforts. As studies confirm, contact with someone in a counter-stereotypical role diminishes bias and, more generally, greater representation of underrepresented groups improves greater participation of those groups in the future.³⁹

Conclusion

In 2012, I wrote, “While I love being a dean, I reluctantly accept my role as a ‘pioneer’ Latina dean.”⁴⁰ In 2019, I embrace it wholeheartedly—as it gives me the freedom to be who I am as a person and as a leader. I can decide to address the microaggressions when they come, with humor or directly (as an “ouch”),⁴¹ as I now understand the harm in not addressing them. I can dress

³⁸ Karen Sloan, *Incoming Batch of Law Deans is More Diverse Than Ever*, LAW.COM (Mar. 21, 2019), <https://www.law.com/2019/03/21/incoming-batch-of-law-deans-is-more-diverse-than-ever/?sreturn=20191105163118> [<https://perma.cc/DT2W-VHA2>]; ALM Media, *More Minority Women Ascend to Law Dean Jobs*, YAHOO FINANCE (Jan. 9, 2019), <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/more-minority-women-ascend-law-043936691.html> [<https://perma.cc/ZM9B-U38X>].

³⁹ See Patricia G. Devine et al., *Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention*, 48 J. EXPERIMENTAL SOC. PSYCHOL. 1267, 1270–71 (2012); Justin D. Levinson & Danielle Young, *Implicit Gender Bias in the Legal Profession: An Empirical Study*, 18 DUKE J. GENDER L. & POL’Y 1, 40–41 (2010); see also Mahzarin R. Banaji, Max H. Bazerman & Dolly Chugh, *How (Un)ethical Are You?*, 81 HARV. BUS. REV. 56, 64 (2003).

⁴⁰ See Rosato, *supra* note 17, at 452.

⁴¹ See SUE, *supra* note 31, at 138.

like myself in a sheath dress with colorful heels or sneakers, rather than a dark suit.⁴²

More importantly, empowering myself will help empower others. As Toni Morrison said: “I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else.’” For the remainder of my time as dean, my job will be to empower the next generation of students, teachers and future deans.

⁴² See Katherine K. Zarrella, *The Most Powerful Women in Business Wear Dresses, Not Suits*, WALL ST. J. (Aug. 29, 2019), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-most-powerful-women-in-business-wear-dresses-not-suits-11567106879> [<https://perma.cc/Y5RG-VUZS>].

“WHY NOT ME?”⁴³: INTERSECTIONALITY IN LAW SCHOOL LEADERSHIPELENA MARIA MARTY-NELSON⁴⁴

It was truly an honor to be part of the panel discussing *Intersectionality: Strengths and Challenges in Leadership* during the Fourth National People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference (NPOC 2019).⁴⁵ During our panel presentation, I was flanked by extraordinary and insightful law school leaders, who are also women of color.⁴⁶ I use the term “flanked by” deliberately. My seat happened to have been in the center of the panel table and, therefore, I physically had wonderful women law school deans on both sides. More importantly, however, I use the term to describe the feeling I had of being sustained and supported by my co-panelists, who are each brilliant, strong, resilient, and generous. With them at the table, I felt community and strength and, after hearing their remarks, I also felt true excitement for the future of legal education.

My presentation was at the end of our panel session and, therefore, I was able to tailor my remarks to incorporate some of the questions and ideas raised by the earlier panelists. For example, Dean Jennifer Rosato Perea had discussed the need for succession planning for law school deans, and I was able to interweave her succinct call for action on this front with my planned remarks. As I was listening to my co-panelists, I also recognized how, even though we were in different leadership roles, we shared many similar experiences as women of color.⁴⁷ Before turning to the crux of my remarks, I will mention how I became part of this panel and my goals for serving on the panel.

My role on this panel of women of color deans started from a conversation I had with

⁴³ The title of this essay borrows from a popular Enrique Iglesias song, “Why Not Me?.” ENRIQUE IGLESIAS, *Why Not Me?*, on EUPHORIA (Universal Music Latino/Universal Republic 2010). “Why Not Me?” is one of the songs from Enrique Iglesias’ album *Euphoria*, which an article in Billboard referred to as trailblazing because Iglesias chose a new route—recording different songs in both Spanish and English—to break through as a Latin artist. Leila Cobo, *Enrique Iglesias Trailblazes With New ‘Euphoria’ Album*, BILLBOARD (June 25, 2010), <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/957606/enrique-iglesias-trailblazes-with-new-euphoria-album> [<https://perma.cc/JXV9-AL66>]. This resonated with me because I advocate for finding different routes to break through.

⁴⁴ Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Public Impact & Professor of Law, Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad College of Law, J.D., Georgetown University Law Center, LL.M. (Tax), Georgetown University Law Center.

⁴⁵ I sincerely appreciate the opportunity I had to participate in the Fourth National People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference. I gained invaluable insights during the panel presentations and in the conversations throughout the conference and I was again inspired by all the participants.

⁴⁶ My co-panelists were Raquel E. Aldana, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Diversity, UC Davis, and Professor of Law, UC Davis School of Law; Danielle M. Conway, Dean, University of Maine School of Law, and incoming Dean, Penn State Dickinson Law; Camille Nelson, Dean, American University Washington College of Law; Angela Onwuachi-Willig, Dean, Boston University School of Law; Huyen Pham, Professor of Law, Texas A&M University School of Law; Jennifer Rosato Perea, Dean, DePaul University College of Law; and Sudha Setty, Dean, Western New England School of Law. M. Isabel Medina, Ferris Family Distinguished Professor of Law, Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, served as our moderator.

⁴⁷ Professor Michele Benedetto Neitz noted that “women faculty members may be ‘overlooked for the formal leadership positions, though they tend to do much of the work already.’” Michele Benedetto Neitz, *Pulling Back the Curtain: Implicit Bias in the Law School Dean Search Process*, 49 SETON HALL L. REV. 629, 664 (2019) (citing Meera E. Deo, *Trajectory of a Law Professor*, 20 MICH. J. RACE & L. 442, 443 (2015)).

Professor M. Isabel Medina and Professor Eloisa C. Rodriguez-Dod at the Promoting Diversity in Law School Leadership Workshop,⁴⁸ a conference designed to encourage women and members of underrepresented groups to enter law school leadership. The three of us had discussed some of the unique challenges and barriers faced by women of color aspiring to formal leadership roles, and finding creative ways to navigate those hurdles. I mentioned my slightly unconventional methods. When Professor Medina was organizing this intersectionality panel for NPOC 2019, she recalled our conversation and invited me to serve as a panelist.

My co-panelists addressed myriad issues on intersectionality, including the various barriers in the way of people of color, especially women of color, to, and even once in, leadership positions. I focused my remarks on (1) different paths to formal leadership positions, (2) various ways to support and empower each other to reach these positions, and (3) the need to sustain and nourish each other while we serve in these positions. Several questions arose. How do we find ways to navigate hurdles? How do we ensure that we have opportunities to grow professionally, to lead, and to develop others? How do we protect and support each other while serving in leadership positions? While in many respects these issues present different challenges, they all serve critical societal goals beyond legal academia. Opportunities for intersectional leaders are also vital in law firm partnerships, corporate management and governance, positions in government—and the list goes on.

In addressing the issue of different paths for faculty into formal leadership positions in legal academia, I discussed my personal path. I first noted that the traditional path to leadership positions in many law schools is applying for or being tapped for Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. If the law school, however, has no immediate openings for formal leadership positions, for example, only one associate dean position and that position is already filled and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, I would suggest going sideways or diagonally.

As a Latina, an immigrant, and a woman, when the traditional path to leadership in my law school was not immediately accessible, I went diagonally and, in effect, crafted an associate dean position. I knew I had to demonstrate the value of this new position to my dean and provost. I drew upon my role as a Securities Regulations professor and put together practically an entire prospectus with goals, strategies, leadership background, risks, and financials, including a funding source. With that prospectus ready, I approached the Dean with the proposal of creating a position of Associate Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, and Public Impact. The role I envisioned was one that fit my passions and that would, most importantly, also be beneficial to the law school, the university, and the community. The Dean was very receptive. He recognized that, although we worked in a very diverse law school community, with underrepresented students in leadership positions and underrepresented tenured faculty, we knew, as a law school, that we could not take diversity and inclusion for granted. We needed to work on maintaining our diversity and fostering inclusion every day. When discussing the title for the position, I stressed the import of at least an associate dean level. With an associate dean title, I could make a bigger impact in reaching our diversity and inclusion goals. Although I had been developing and running pipeline programs for elementary, middle, and high school students for over a decade, and had been mentoring for years, the associate dean title would send a greater signal to the community as to the value we place on diversity,

⁴⁸ The Promoting Diversity in Law School Leadership Workshop (Aug. 2019), <https://www.lsc.org/events/eighth-annual-promoting-diversity-law-school-leadership> [<https://perma.cc/54RK-99S4>]. The Workshop was hosted by Seattle University School of Law, in partnership with Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, and sponsored by AALS, LSAC, and SALT.

inclusion, and public impact. Such associate dean titles were not common at the time of my proposal. Now other schools are, however, also moving beyond Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and have recognized the need for several other formal leadership roles, such as Associate Dean for External Relations, Diversity & Inclusion, Associate Dean for Experiential Learning, and Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives. All of these can be paths to leadership positions in law schools.

By the way, there is a risk with suggesting an entirely new leadership position. The dean could say “Great, I have someone in mind for that,” and that person could be someone other than you. So, you would want to, and I had to, not only promote the new position to the dean and provost, but also demonstrate why you would be the appropriate person to fill the inaugural position. Beyond my prior work on diversity initiatives and chairing law school committees, I needed to demonstrate to my dean and institution my robust leadership abilities. I had long been determined to develop my leadership skills and did so outside the law school in service to various national legal organizations and community organizations. For example, I had chaired an Association of American Law Schools (AALS) section, served on the board of trustees for the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) and on the board of directors for my county’s Hispanic bar association, and chaired or served on several American Bar Association (ABA) site inspection teams. I strongly recommend such outside service. All of those service activities hone and demonstrate leadership. Moreover, service on such outside organizations not only benefits legal education generally, but also establishes vital relationships with people in the legal academy who will recognize your worth and dedication and affirm your leadership abilities.

Although I mentioned going sideways or diagonally and described how it was a successful path for me, I stressed during the panel, and still feel strongly, that traditional paths also need to open. Would I like to see the traditional path available and truly accessible to all of us? Yes. But I also suggest finding or creating innovative alternatives.

In addition to discussing alternative paths to obtain formal leadership positions, we also discussed the need to support each other in attaining, and thriving in, formal leadership positions. How do we foster other people of color in their paths to leadership in the academy? There are several things we can do. First, even before we reach our leadership goals, we need to step up, reach out, and help each other onto these paths. There are numerous opportunities to support. We can nominate each other for leadership positions in legal organizations, invite each other to events with other leaders, and brainstorm ideas. Once we are in these leadership positions, we need to reach out to faculty who might also have interests in leadership positions. As faculty members, we often collaborate with other academics on our scholarship interests in symposia or workshops. We need to do at least as much with leadership positions in the academy so we not only open opportunities, but also sustain and develop each other when serving in formal leadership roles.⁴⁹

Along these lines, I think we need to embrace the notion of rotating these formal leadership positions, especially associate dean positions. This is not a new idea. In business, leaders generally manage various facets of their company, so they are familiar with different divisions and company needs before they become chief executive officers or chief operating officers. Why don’t we do this in more law schools? Not only would it make for more well-rounded deans, it also allows us to give opportunities for formal leadership that were not available to many of us. I plan to not just talk the

⁴⁹ The Leadership Workshop for Associate Deans hosted by Georgetown University Law Center. The workshop provides such opportunities, and is designed not only for incoming or current associate deans, but also for those who aspire to such leadership positions. Information on the workshop is on file with the author.

talk, but also walk the walk and rotate out. Although I love my diversity dean position, I know that there are wonderful other people of color who have been working with me on our goals and should have opportunities. I'll keep pushing up, but I want to open up too.