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“To Kindred, being a first was not the goal itself, but simply a step along the way to achieving a goal.”

Dean's Column

BY GUEST WRITER RACHEL ANDERSON, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LAW,
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KAY KINDRED, A NEVADA “FIRST”

Kay Kindred became the first female African-American law professor at the William S. Boyd School of Law in 1999. She went on to become the first female African-American professor to be granted tenure at the law school in 2003. In 2007, Kindred became the first female African-American law professor to be appointed to the administration of the law school, where she currently serves as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. In each of these cases, she was also the first African-American—male or female.

As a “first,” Kindred’s life story is unique. At the same time, her story is similar to that of many “firsts,” in that she was a first in more ways than one. To Kindred, however, being a first was not the goal itself, but simply a step along the way to achieving a goal. “I had never really focused on the fact that I was the first,” she says. “When I came here, it was apparent, but it wasn’t something that I ever thought about much.”

Kindred grew up in Virginia, during the 1960s and 1970s. Although she was too young to be involved, she was very aware of the Civil Rights Movement. She saw and experienced the transition from segregation to integration.

Kindred attended Duke University with the intention of going to law school. She received her undergraduate degree, cum laude, in just



Kay Kindred

three years, with concentrations in political science and sociology. She then attended law school at Columbia University School of Law. At Columbia, Kindred received the Award of Recognition of Achievement with Honors in International and Foreign and Comparative Law and worked as submissions editor on the *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*.

Although she knew she wanted to be a lawyer, Kindred’s goals did not initially include becoming a law professor—that interest evolved over time. She was hired right out of law school to join the corporate legal staff at General Electric Co. in Fairfield,

CT. Next, she became the assistant to the general counsel at the office of the general counsel at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA.

When Kindred entered academia, as the deputy director of the Institute of Bill of Rights Law at the College of William and Mary, Marshall-Wythe School of Law in Williamsburg, VA., she found it to be a good fit. “[I] enjoyed the switch from practice to academia, the life of the mind and interacting with the students,” she explains. At the same time, she was an adjunct professor and had started to pursue her own research and scholarship. (Over the years, Kindred penned a book and many book chapters, and authored law review articles on corporate law, education law and children and the law.)

A few years later William and Mary Professor Paul Marcus, a long-time friend of founding Dean Dick Morgan, informed Kindred of the opportunity to build a new law school in Las Vegas. She liked Morgan's ideas for the law school and clicked with the other faculty members during her interview.

"The opportunity to build a law school is not one that comes along very often," Kindred recalls. "The notion of building something was shared by the faculty, students and administration. There was an *esprit de corps* that is unique for a law school."

Kindred's accomplishments are not limited to her career; her community service work continues to make a difference in people's lives. In 2006, Kindred became the first African-American woman delegate from Nevada to the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. As a commissioner, she participates in creating legislation that addresses problems that occur across jurisdictions.

As a Uniform Law Commissioner, Kindred contributed to significant reforms of the legal system. She has drafted amendments to the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act and was involved in having those amendments adopted by the Nevada Legislature. This act made it easier to enforce family support in multiple jurisdictions. Kindred is currently involved in working on legislation to address family custody and legislation issues for military families. She is also on a commission drafting committee working on uniform legislation regarding state law governing premarital and marital agreements. In addition, Kindred is in her second term as a member of the Nevada Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Western Division) and is a member of the Las Vegas chapter of the National Bar Association.

Becoming a law professor allowed Kindred to fulfill her vision of contributing to change through participating in the building of the William S. Boyd School of Law. "Since the Law School was founded, it has made an impact," she explains. "We have partnered with the bench, the bar and the legislature to make a difference." ■

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