Trial Team Takes National Title
A Message from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends,

The 2017-2018 school year marked many milestones. We welcomed back our charter class and celebrated the school’s beginnings. We bid farewell to University President Msgr. Franklyn Casale, and three long-serving members of our faculty: Professors Larry Fedro, Amy Ronner, and Nadia Soree. Our students and alumni continue to excel, and we feature their stories throughout this issue of the \textit{St. Thomas Lawyer}.

Our cover story features this year’s championship trial team students, who took on some of the nation’s best in the American Bar Association’s Labor & Employment Law National Trial Competition. Congratulations to these talented students for winning the national title! Congrats, as well, to their dedicated coaches and advisors.

We also salute alumni who have recently become new judges: Judge Georgina Picos ’91, the first St. Thomas Law graduate appointed to the federal bench (page 3); Judges Thomas Coleman ’97 and Tarlika Nunez Navarro ’10 (both appointed to the Broward County Circuit Court), and Judge Kim Theresa Mollica ’89 (elected to the Broward county court bench).

The article “Human Rights Heroes” celebrates the great work of our Human Rights Institute. At a time in our country when immigrants are at incredible risk and uncertainty, the Human Rights Institute and its committed staff offer a desperately needed helping hand. The Institute is the embodiment of our mission – providing assistance to the vulnerable and underserved in our community.

This year also marked the 30th anniversary of our Charter Class. The law school welcomed members of the Class of 1987 to campus last fall to remember the school’s early days, and to celebrate where these pioneering alumni are today.

Lastly, we say goodbye to Msgr. Franklyn Casale who, after 24 years as the President of St. Thomas University, will retire this summer. Under his leadership, the University has grown and prospered. His legacy is found in our new buildings, in new academic programs and community partnerships, and in the supportive, nurturing environment that permeates the campus. We wish Msgr. Casale all the best in his retirement.

I also wish each of you and your families all the best as we approach the summer months, and thank you for your continued support.

With warmest regards,

Alfredo Garcia
Dean and Acting University Provost
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$2.5 Million Gift to St. Thomas Law’s Human Trafficking Academy

In November 2017, St. Thomas Law and its highly-acclaimed Human Trafficking Academy received a gift of two and a half million dollars, generously donated by Mr. John Brunetti, Chairman of the Hialeah Park Racing & Casino. Unfortunately, Mr. Brunetti passed away in March 2018.

Founded and directed by Prof. Roza Pati, the Academy was established in 2010 with the support of a grant by the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Academy is home to a variety of multi-disciplinary anti-trafficking action: conferences, symposia, trainings, presentations, workshops, research and publications.

For Pati, who has been working on the problématique of human trafficking since the early 1990s, “This gift is a blessing that will help us accomplish many desired goals and enhance the Academy’s presence in our great state. The beneficiary is a community aspiring to be free of slave labor, products and services; survivors, whose lives we will help put back together, simultaneously empowering Florida’s human resources, whose mission is to condemn and bring to justice those who appropriate people’s free will, labor and sweat. Our work will assist human trafficking victims regain their lives.”

The Academy will continue its cooperation with federal agencies, State Attorneys’ offices, the private sector and civil society in order to expand resources, and to better understand the trends of human trafficking as well as the needs of national and foreign victims.

“We are proud to be the recipient of this generous gift,” said Dean Alfredo Garcia. “Our unstinting efforts, through the work of Professor Pati and our faculty, staff, and alumni, to eradicate the scourge of human trafficking will be enhanced by this gift.”

The Princeton Review (2018) ranks St. Thomas Law:

#2 Greatest Resources for Minority Students

#9 Most Diverse Faculty
Judge Georgina Picos First St. Thomas Law Graduate Named to Federal Bench

Judge Georgina M. Picos, a member of the Class of 1991, was named a United States Immigration Judge in June 2016. She holds the distinction of being the first St. Thomas Law graduate appointed to the federal judiciary.

Appointed by former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch, Judge Picos serves in the federal immigration court in Houston. “The St. Thomas community proudly celebrates our first alumna to be appointed as a federal Immigration Judge,” stated Dean Alfredo Garcia. “Judge Picos’ distinguished career as a dedicated public servant will continue as she embarks on this new phase of her legal career.” Congratulations to Judge Picos!

L.E.A.D. Attorneys Taking the Lead

In November 2017, alumna Maria T. Sallato presented to attorneys in the St. Thomas Law LEAD Program, an incubator program that assists recent graduates who are solo practitioners/starting small firms, and have a commitment to doing pro bono work in their respective communities. “LEAD” stands for Lawyers. Entrepreneurs. Advocates. Dedicated to giving back.

Ms. Sallato, who has built her own family and matrimonial law practice since graduating in 1990, spoke to the LEAD attorneys about starting her own practice and building it over the last couple decades, as well as the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Abduction. LEAD attorneys pictured (L-R) with Maria are Alain Roman ’16, Eneami Bestman ’15, Dean Garcia, Ms. Sallato, Jennifer Torres ’17, Camilo Valencia ’17, and Pamela Ferretjans ’16.
Second Annual Law School  5K Raises Funds for Needy Children

The St. Thomas Law Moot Court Team collaborated with the Office for Alumni Relations for the second annual 5K race, which was held in April 2017. The next race will take place in the Fall of 2018. The event was open to the entire university community as well as the surrounding South Florida community of runners. Close to 70 runners started off in front of the law school on a somewhat brisk April morning, and got a tour of various parts of campus that few folks ever frequent. Msgr. Casale, President of St. Thomas, greeted runners at the finish line and presented prizes to the top three men’s and women’s finishers.

Thanks to the Moot Court Team, led in large part by the efforts of Jason Ross ’17, St. Thomas raised $1,000 from the proceeds of the race and donated the amount to the Children’s Home Society of Florida.

Law Review Honors Memory of Prof. Murray Greenberg

The St. Thomas Law Review held a symposium entitled “Civility and Professionalism in the Law: The Road to Justice.” The symposium and the subsequent symposium issue of the Law Review were dedicated to the late Professor Murray Greenberg, a long-time adjunct professor at the law school. The dedication in the symposium issue was written by Professor Greenberg’s sons, Benjamin and Gerald Greenberg.

Pictured (L-R): Gerald Greenberg, Esq., Dean Alfredo Garcia, and Benjamin Greenberg, the Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida.
Intercultural Human Rights Law Review Ranked No. 6 in the World


Volume 12 of the acclaimed journal was recently published and features groundbreaking articles on the iconic Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina; the adaptation of human rights standards to local norms in the African Ebola crisis; a quantitative assessment of the United Nations’ Universal Periodic Review process; an analysis and call for action on classified websites and sex trafficking; and in-depth articles on the Law Review’s symposium on Florida’s Stand Your Ground laws.

Trial Team Hosts Alumni from Alumni-Strong Firms

St. Thomas Law’s mock trial students hosted alumni for a panel discussion on the importance of one’s professional and personal reputation in the legal community, as well as strategies for achieving ideal work-life balance.

Pictured L-R in the front row: Houson Lafrance ’14, a criminal defense attorney and founding partner of Cox, Golondrino and Lafrance, PA, a Plantation firm founded by three members of the Class of 2014 (Tim Cox and Luis Golondrino); Mike Mayer ’07, adjunct professor and director of the Trial Team and the litigation managing attorney at Peyton Bolin, PL, a Fort Lauderdale real estate firm founded by two St. Thomas Law alumni (Mauri Peyton ’07 and Jane Bolin ’07); and Joey McCall ’11, who is a partner (with Lincoln Atten ’11) at McCall Atten, an international law firm with offices in Miami and Canada.

Tax Law Symposium

In April 2018, Professor Mark Wolff and St. Thomas’s Tax Law Society hosted a symposium on the recent tax cuts and jobs act (“Decoding H.R. 1: Challenges & Opportunities”). Over 100 tax attorneys attended the successful event.

Pictured L-R at an alumni luncheon after the symposium are three 1997 graduates: Joseph Landolfi, Jr., Partner, Shapiro, Blasi, Wasserman & Hermann P.A.; Robert J. Robes, Wells Fargo Wealth Management; and Stewart L. Kasner, Partner, Holland & Knight. Landolfi, Robes, and Kasner all served as panelists during the symposium, as well as alumna Jennifer J. Wioncek ’05, Partner at Bilzin Sumberg (not pictured).
First Black Editor-in-Chief of Law Review Recognized

Chanae Wood ’18 was recognized by Miami-Dade County Commissioner Barbara Jordan for being the first black Editor-in-Chief of the St. Thomas Law Review. She served as Editor-in-Chief during the 2017-2018 academic year.

“I’m honored to have been selected as the first Black Editor-in-Chief, especially considering that there is a lack of representation of people of color in the legal field.” She continued, “However, I’m even more honored that I was selected based on my merit and passion for the organization.”

Jorge Fors ’11 Wins $10.4 Million Verdict on Behalf of Miami Business Owner

After a three-week trial and four hours of deliberation, a Miami jury awarded approximately $10.4 million to a Doral-based business owner who claimed that his former business partners strategically colluded to destroy his company. The favorable verdict in a case involving the alleged breach of business agreements (plus damages) was six years in the making for the plaintiff, and made possible in large part because of the plaintiff’s attorney, Jorge Fors, Jr., ’11 of Fors Attorneys at Law in Coral Gables.

Mr. Fors recently served as the 63rd President of the Coral Gables Bar Association for 2016-1017. While in law school, Fors was a judicial intern for Florida Supreme Court Justice Peggy Quince, a research assistant for Professor Jennifer Martin, and a member of the Student Bar Association, Moot Court Team, Mock Trial Team, Phi Alpha Delta Law, and the Honorable Rosemary Barkett Appellate Inn of Court.
Why Run for Office?  
A Public Sector Alumni Panel

Dean Alfredo Garcia received a Hispanic Leadership Award from the South Florida Chamber of Commerce.  
Dean Garcia was presented with the award in recognition of his “leadership, trajectory, experience and commitment to the field of law.”  
The Chamber of Commerce stated that Dean Garcia has clearly distinguished himself as a very successful lawyer, educator and writer, making the Hispanic community “extremely proud of [his] many contributions...”
Spotlight on Service

Brett Barfield ’99 was recognized by The Florida Bar for his extensive pro bono work, receiving the President’s Pro Bono Service Award.

Barfield, a partner at Holland & Knight in Miami, led his firm in handling more than 80 cases under The Hague Convention on International Parental Child Abduction. He donated more than 380 hours of his time in 2016 and coordinates Holland & Knight’s pro bono program. “St. Thomas Law is proud to count Brett Barfield among our alumni,” said Dean Garcia. “He is the embodiment of the St. Thomas Law values of professionalism, ethics and public service.”

Diego Sanchez ’19 was selected as a member of the Equal Justice Works (EJW) National Advisory Committee.

“As an immigrant rights advocate committed to equal justice, I was thrilled to learn I was selected to serve in this capacity,” stated Diego. “This will allow me to play a leadership role at the national level in addition to supporting EJW’s programs and new initiatives.”

During his first year at St. Thomas Law, Diego re-established the Immigration Law Students Association (ILSA) and became active with the Public Interest Law Society (PILS). As a member of ILSA, Diego is active in community citizenship clinics that assist low-income individuals with their citizenship applications.

St. Thomas Law remains committed to teaching, training, and empowering the next generation of advocates and community leaders.

Melissa Ramos ’19 spent the summer serving those in need through the Rural Summer Legal Corps. Melissa worked at Legal Services of North Florida, Inc., advocating for individuals who are hindered within their communities because of past criminal convictions.

Melissa joined 29 other public interest law students in addressing legal issues facing rural communities. Students received training from poverty law experts on housing, domestic violence, public benefits, and more before returning to their host site for an 8-10 week placement.
Human Rights Heroes

16 STAFF MEMBERS.
MORE THAN 16,000 SERVICES PROVIDED AT NO CHARGE ANNUALLY.
THE ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE DEFINES WHAT IT MEANS TO HELP THE UNDERSERVED IN OUR COMMUNITY
The current state of immigration policy in the United States has placed immigrants living in the U.S. in a world of uncertainty and fear. In response to this time of uncertainty, St. Thomas Law’s Human Rights Institute (HRI) fulfills its mission every day: to serve this population of immigrants with compassion and respect, in a world of shrinking funding and growing demand.

“The changes in immigration policy have affected every aspect of the HRI and the people it serves,” says Christine Reis ’98, a proud St. Thomas Law alumna and the Executive Director of HRI.

Federal funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement was slashed throughout the State of Florida. Reid also notes that every agency which serves this legal, documented immigration population has suffered severe funding losses and layoffs statewide.

Due to these changes, HRI lost 46% of its funding, forcing the closure of its Palm Beach office and drastic cuts to its Miami office. “More importantly,” Reis adds, “these funding cuts leave a particularly vulnerable population of documented immigrants, who have legal status, yet are unable to access services created to help them assimilate into our communities.”

“It means everything to me to be able to help our clients. It is my honor and privilege to make a difference in people’s lives. Everyone deserves representation, and I firmly believe our society will be judged by how we treat those in need and those less fortunate.”

Christie Anne Darias Daniels
Senior Attorney
St. Thomas University
Human Rights Institute

While the recent changes in policy have had a significant impact on documented immigrants, the changes have been devastating for undocumented immigrants.

“These are the clients we fear for the most,” Reis says. For this group, it is not funding cuts that pose risks, but rather the change in detention policies. “Under current policy, even law-abiding undocumented immigrants are subject to detention and deportation. It does not matter if they own a house, own a business, or help their community. They are at risk every moment of the day. As advocates, we are left with very few ways to protect these people.”

In spite of these daunting challenges, the St. Thomas University Human Rights Institute continues to make a difference in thousands of lives. “Last year, HRI provided over 16,000 services free of charge to low-to-moderate income immigrants throughout Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe counties,” says Reis. “Most of our clients are asylees, refugees, Cuban-Haitian entrants, and victims of human trafficking. We assist them with preparation and filing of their USCIS applications, provide attorney consultations, and offer...
representation before the Immigration Court, The Board of Immigration appeals and USCIS.

Currently, the HRI has an office in Miami with twelve staff members and an office in Broward with four staff members. In addition to the staff, Reis mentions that students from St. Thomas Law and other area law schools volunteer with HRI in order to satisfy their pro-bono requirements. “These volunteers help us greatly—doing research, making phone calls, and preparing clients for Immigration Court and USCIS interviews.”

Since 1992, the St. Thomas University Human Rights Institute has been living out its mission to serve vulnerable immigrants in our community. “Most of HRI’s staff members are immigrants or children of immigrants,” notes Reis, “so we understand their concerns, their fears, and their dreams.” She adds, “as advocates, we are deeply saddened to see drastic cuts in the number of refugees that will be allowed to enter the United States to try to make a new and better life for themselves. It goes against the spirit of our country.”

While the landscape of immigration policy continues to shift, the dedicated staff at HRI will continue to go above and beyond to help those most in need. They will continue to fight for those without a voice in our society, providing knowledge, peace and empowerment to immigrants across South Florida.

“Most of HRI’s staff members are immigrants or children of immigrants so we understand their concerns, their fears, and their dreams.”

Christine Reis ’98, Executive Director
St. Thomas University
Human Rights Institute

Never Too Old:
HRI Helps a 99 Year-Old Client

A 99 year-old man living in a nursing facility was referred to HRI for being undocumented and therefore unfunded. When HRI staff called on him at the home, they found his speech was very limited—using a whistle to signal yes. HRI staff noticed he was Cuban and filled out a Freedom of Information Act request. In the response to this request, HRI noted that there was a very old parole making him eligible to apply for residency pursuant to the Cuban Adjustment Act. HRI applied, requesting accommodations for his condition. The man became a Legal Permanent resident of the United States at 101 years old.
Due to the hard work of four members of the Class of 2018, the year 2018 began with a bang for St. Thomas Law this past January. These four Trial Team students – Luis Garcia, Karina Harduvel, Jillian Tate, and Chanae Wood – traveled to New Orleans and bested some formidable opponents at the American Bar Association’s Labor & Employment Law National Trial Competition, bringing home the national title. On its way to the championship round against the University of California – Hastings (whose teams had won the competition the previous two years), the St. Thomas Law team vanquished its opposition from the following schools: Harvard Law, Northwestern Law, and Southern Methodist’s Dedman School of Law. Thanks to these four students and their dedicated coaches – Jeff James, Esq., Dionne McDonald-Josephs, Esq., and faculty advisor Michael Mayer, Esq. ’09. – St. Thomas Law proved once again that while it may not have the history of other law schools, its students (and alumni) can compete with and beat the likes of anyone.

ANSWERED PRAYERS AND A VICTORY TOAST
In a special “Salute to Champions” celebratory reception at the law school, the entire law school community feted the fearsome foursome of Garcia, Harduvel, Tate and Wood a couple weeks after their return from New Orleans. Before a crowd of students and professors, Dean Garcia praised the students for their hours of hard work and dedication, for winning with class, and representing the law school with professionalism. Speaking on behalf of her fellow champions, Chanae Wood said that her three teammates and she “formed an unbreakable bond because we four accomplished this milestone together.”

THE ROAD TO NEW ORLEANS
Long before the possibility of celebrating in style in the Big Easy, the Trial Team needed to succeed in the Miami regional competition in October 2017. The fearsome foursome competed against teams from Washburn University, Florida Coastal, University of Texas, and (in the final round) Emory University. Coming out on top in the regional round, the St. Thomas Law team felt like it had accomplished a lot even at that point. One hurdle it overcame came in the form of a September storm: Hurricane Irma delayed their prep time for the regional competition significantly. “We were a little afraid that the other teams had a leg up on us in terms of preparation,” said Chanae Wood. The team persisted, however, practicing five nights a week and every weekend for the rest of the fall semester, as well as two days a week during the winter break. The coaches even changed the material on the students unexpectedly, forcing them to adapt quickly. “We had to be chameleons,” said Wood.

HARD WORK AND GREAT COACHING
All the months of preparation, the hours of hard work at night and on weekends, over the winter break, and the challenging coaching – it all paid off in New Orleans. Professor Kenya Smith, who had been helping the students since well before the regional round in Miami, proved particularly helpful when the team made it to his hometown of New Orleans. Professor Smith “assisted us a lot with respect to the big shift to nationals – the different culture, the dress code, the federal judges in Louisiana,” Luis Garcia commented. “We learned from his local perspective that judges see things differently there. We adjusted for the judges, and for going against six heavy hitters.” In the end, only one heavy hitter went home with a championship: St. Thomas Law. Congratulations to the Trial Team members and their coaches!
Saluting a Quarter Century of Leadership and Service
Wishing our President, Msgr. Casale, All the Best in his Retirement

In 2017, Monsignor Franklyn Casale, President of St. Thomas University since 1994 and the longest-serving president in its history, announced that he would be retiring effective the summer of 2018. His exceptional leadership has transformed St. Thomas University exponentially, and his vision has helped shape St. Thomas for the next generation. Over the past quarter century, the university has reached various milestones, including the expansion of campus facilities, the restructuring of the university into six schools, and the establishment of the institution’s first doctoral program. The entire St. Thomas Law family salutes Msgr. Casale for his leadership and support of the law school over the past 24 years, and wishes him all the best in his retirement!

24 Years as President

By the Numbers

MOST REVEREND THOMAS G. WENSKI, ARCHBISHOP OF MIAMI: “Msgr. Casale’s long tenure has been a blessing to St. Thomas University as well to our South Florida community. We all owe Monsignor a big ‘thank you’ for his vision, commitment and dedication.”

DEAN ALFREDO GARCIA: “Msgr. Casale is responsible for the growth and transformation of St. Thomas University and our law school. His 24 years of exemplary service to the University is unparalleled in higher education. He is truly a leader for life. His contribution to the law school and to legal education – he served as a member of over 20 American Bar Association site inspections of law schools across the country – has solidified the stature and reputation of our law school.”

HERMAN J. RUSSOMANNO, ESQ., CHAIR EMERITUS, BOARD OF ADVISORS: “The legacy of Msgr. Casale for the past 24 years at St. Thomas University is overpowering. Having worked with Monsignor for his entire presidency, I have seen the footprints of his exceptional leadership and vision. Legacies are meant to be passed along as lessons for future generations. The Msgr. Casale Honors College will empower leaders for life, and will serve as a powerful symbol to future generations of Monsignor’s dedication to students and higher education.”

JUDE M. FACCIDOMO, ESQ. ’04: “I have been fortunate to know Msgr. Casale in a variety of roles: as President of St. Thomas, as a priest, as an engaged member of the Miami community, and as my uncle. In each of these roles, he devotes himself entirely. His dedication to his faith, his family, and his community is without reservation and elevates all those around him. As a teenager I watched my uncle being installed as president of St. Thomas University, and now, 24 years later, with the school’s growth in size and reputation, I look around the campus and the community as a whole and marvel at the significant impact of Monsignor’s time at St. Thomas and the breadth of his legacy.”

REV. MSGR. FRANKLYN M. CASALE: “My biggest sense of accomplishment, as both a spiritual and academic leader, comes every year during commencement. Nothing matches the sense of pride I feel at seeing our students from all walks of life take the stage and become graduates of St. Thomas University. I am proud of our alumni, their professional accomplishments, and their leadership in the community.”

NEW BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED ON CAMPUS:
Villanova Hall, Carnival Cruise Lines Science & Technology Building, Fernandez Center for Leadership & Wellness, and the law school’s Center for Professional Development

5,042 Law School Graduates

5 New Buildings Constructed on Campus:

By the Numbers
Wherever King George III, the British monarch presented with the American colonies’ Declaration of Independence, is spending eternity, it’s a good bet he’s recently experienced a profound sense of déjà vu.

What has often been called “America’s Greatest Document” catalogues the ways in which the Crown had violated the “unalienable rights” of the colonists, and a close reading of the document – from either side of today’s Great Partisan Divide – reveals an uncanny resemblance between the Founders’ grievances and those currently leveled at the Trump administration.

On immigration, for example: the Declaration of Independence decries the King’s “obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing ... to encourage their migrations hither ... .” Sensing political unrest among both the colonists and the large wave of 18th century immigrants to the New World, King George sought to limit the growing opposition to his tight colonial rule by curbing immigration and naturalization.

On building a wall: the King did one better than the President with respect to building a wall to keep immigrants out. In agrarian times, colonists and immigrants pushed ever westward to claim land. To prevent the expansion and economic empowerment of the restive colonies, the monarch used the Appalachian Mountains as a ready made wall, beyond which his Royal Proclamation of 1763 prohibited settlement, effectively curbing the ability of the colonies to absorb more immigrants.

On protectionist barriers to trade: the King was also condemned in the Declaration “[f]or cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world” – except, of course, with Great Britain – as a protectionist means of strengthening the English economy while keeping that of the increasingly unruly colonies in check.

On relations with the judicial branch: the Founders denounced George for having “obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Law for establishing Judiciary powers.” Although the President hasn’t shut courts...
down – as the King did with the judicial system established by the North Carolina colonial assembly – he has consistently bullied judges whose decisions he doesn’t like.

That close reading of our Greatest Document also turns up some not-so-great positions. The Founders, for example, charged that, in order to preoccupy and contain the rebellious colonists, King George “has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.”

Jefferson and company, who so admirably announced in the second sentence of the document that “all men are created equal” and enjoy the “unalienable rights . . . [of] Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” later in the document forgot the inalienable right of indigenous people not to be forcibly expelled from their lands.

The Founders managed to alienate another unalienable right by deleting a provision in Jefferson’s original draft condemning slavery, as if one is free to pursue happiness while involuntarily rowing an English galley across the ocean to perform forced labor in their owner’s fields.

Young children are taught in school to unquestioningly revere much of American history, as if a more critical examination breeds disloyalty. Standard education’s Eurocentric take on the nation’s past becomes religion, criticism becomes blasphemy, and we are prevented from learning the lessons of history.

“America’s Greatest Document” is exhibit A in this regard. Which is not to say it’s not a great document in many ways: the principles of inalienable personal rights and that governments “deriv[e] their just powers from the consent of the governed” were compelling steps forward in the recognition of human rights and the right of self-governance, and the bulk of the Founders’ grievances against the Crown addressed intolerable abuses.

We must, however, understand that the document – like the slave-owning, would-be abolitionist who penned it – has a dark side, as well, and that to deny or disregard it is to debase our current vision of justice and human dignity.

What has often been called “America’s Greatest Document” catalogues the ways in which the Crown had violated the “unalienable rights” of the colonists, and a close reading of the document – from either side of today’s Great Partisan Divide – reveals an uncanny resemblance between the Founders’ grievances and those currently leveled at the Trump administration.
Charter Class Reunites to Reconnect and Celebrate 30 Years

By Peter T. Kelly

In November 2017, the law school hosted a distinguished group of graduates for a celebratory reception in the Cordero Breezeway followed by a formal dinner in the main library on campus. Who was this distinguished group, and what was the cause for celebration? Members of the first graduating class of St. Thomas Law – formally known as the “Charter Class” – gathered to celebrate 30 years since their graduation in 1987. For some in the group, it was their first visit back to campus in several years. For all of them, it was a chance to reconnect and reminisce with old friends and classmates.

PIONEERS AND LEADERS

At the dinner, Assistant Dean Peter Kelly welcomed the Charter Class graduates and saluted them as “pioneers who paved the way for over 5,000 alumni to follow in their footsteps.” Both Msgr. Franklyn Casale, President of St. Thomas since 1994, and Dean Garcia also delivered remarks, praising the graduates as accomplished leaders in the legal arena, and thanking them for taking a chance on a law school that, at the time, was experiencing the typical growing pains that any new school encounters.

Inside Convocation Hall, the ballroom was adorned with several black-and-white photos from the law school’s beginnings. One historic picture showed Fr. Patrick O’Neill, the former president of St. Thomas and founder of the law school, at the school’s groundbreaking ceremony. (Fr. Pat was unable to attend the Charter Class dinner due to another engagement in New York City, but his vision and foresight were fondly remembered by all.) Other photos featured some of the graduates as well as four current members of the faculty in attendance: Professors Len Pertnoy, Siegfried Wiessner, Mark Wolff, and Herman Russomanno, who now serves as Chair Emeritus of the law school’s Board of Advisors. Also present at the dinner was the law school’s first-ever registrar, Nancy Nesselt.

FIRST-CLASS TOAST TO THE FIRST CLASS

Highlights from the evening included remarks from two Charter Class members, MaryAnne Lukacs and Patrick Cordero. Ms. Lukacs, who has served on St. Thomas Law’s board of advisors and previously led the law school’s admissions office, offered up humorous impersonations of former faculty members before raising a celebratory glass to her classmates, toasting their experiences as members of the first graduating class and their accomplishments as longtime members of Florida’s legal community.

CORDERO FAMILY PLEDGES $50,000 GIFT FOR STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Patrick Cordero, also a member of the law school’s Board of Advisors as well as a parent of two current St. Thomas Law students, encouraged his classmates to give back and support the law school that gave each of them an opportunity. Mr. Cordero, of course, knows a lot about giving back. Because of his generous support, the Cordero Breezeway bears his name. The evening concluded with a special surprise announcement: Pat and Ana Cordero pledged a $50,000 gift toward the law school. Msgr. Casale expressed his appreciation to the Cordero’s, noting “we can always count on Pat and Ana for their constant support of St. Thomas.” The pledge from the Cordero’s will serve as the lead gift for the St. Thomas Law Charter Class Endowed Scholarship Fund. In a very fitting way, the Charter Class will once again pave the way for all the graduating classes that have followed them. Theirs is the first class to establish an endowed scholarship for future students.

Charter Class Photo opposite page top:
BOTTOM ROW (L-R): Diana Paez-Ramos, Laverne Pinkney, Valerie Dondero, MaryAnne Lukacs, Margaret Eriksson, Henrietta Pace
Toys for Tots: Miami

alumni receptions
alumni receptions

Toys for Tots

Tampa
alumni receptions

New York City
alumni receptions

Fort Lauderdale

Boca Raton
DENNIS W. WARD was elected in November 2016 to State Attorney in Monroe County, Florida, returning him to the office he previously held from 2008 to 2012. Dennis is a former Miami Beach police officer and U.S. Marine Corps veteran.

KIM THERESA MOLLIÇA was elected county court judge in Broward County, Florida, in November 2016 – with nearly 60% of the vote. Judge Mollica previously had her own practice since 1993 (handling both civil and criminal cases), and served as an assistant public defender in Martin and St. Lucie Counties from 1990 to 1993.

JODIE BASSICHIS recently joined, as a Partner, the Fort Lauderdale office of Kelley Kronenberg, a diverse business law firm. Jodie focuses her practice on family and marital law, as well as commercial litigation.

ERIC A. GORDON, Partner at Akerman LLP and chair of its labor & employment group in the West Palm Beach office, was installed as President of the South Palm Beach County Bar Association in June 2017.

THOMAS J. COLEMAN was appointed to the Broward County Circuit court bench in June 2017 by
Governor Rick Scott. Judge Coleman had previously served as a prosecutor in the Broward State Attorney’s Office since 1998.

1999

BRETT A. BARFIELD, Partner at Holland & Knight in Miami, received The Florida Bar President’s Pro Bono Service Award for 2016 in Tallahassee in January 2017. Brett is a past President of the Federal Bar Association (FBA), South Florida Chapter.

2001

OLIVER A. RUIZ, a Partner at Malloy & Malloy in Miami, recently concluded a successful term as President of the Federal Bar Association (FBA), South Florida Chapter, and he is now a fellow of the FBA’s national foundation. Oliver was also inducted recently as the 100th President of the Rotary Club of Miami. At Malloy & Malloy, he concentrates his practice in intellectual property litigation and trademark prosecution.

2005

STACYANN L. HUNTER is an Attorney with The Florida Bar’s Lawyer Regulation Division in Miami.

JAVIER A. LEY-SOTO is the General Counsel for Miami Dade College, overseeing all legal matters for the college and its eight campuses. Prior to joining Miami-Dade in the fall of 2016, Javier had served (since 2007) as Chief Legal Counsel for the Florida Department of Children and Families.

JENNIFER J. WIONCEK was named Partner at the Miami office of Bilzin Sumberg. Jennifer works in the Miami office’s Tax & Estate Planning Group. Wioncek is recognized in domestic and international trust and estate planning for high net worth international private clients and their families.

COLLETT B. SMALL was elected in June 2017 as Chair of The Florida Bar’s Elder Law Section. The first woman of color and of Jamaican heritage to serve as chair, Collett has been practicing law for 12 years and is one of many women who sought to embark on a second career while living the corporate lifestyle and raising a family.
2007

RICHARD T. CHAMPAGNE of Champagne Law Group, P.A. was recognized at the Haitian American Chamber of Commerce of Florida gala as one of the “Young Professionals Top 20 Under 40.” Mr. Champagne is also President of the Haitian Lawyers Association.

2009

ANDREW M. GORDON is a partner at Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP in Fort Lauderdale. He focuses his practice in the representation of management-side labor and employment matters.

2010

JAMIL D. GITTENS is the Senior Manager for Media Affairs for the National Football League.

ADRIA NOTARI recently joined Lipcon, Margulies, Alsina & Winkleman in Miami, where she advocates for the rights of maritime workers, passengers, and businesses harmed by the wrongful acts of others.

2011

LISA LUCENA, previously the director of admissions at St. Thomas Law, accepted a position as Associate Dean of Admissions at Liberty University School of Law in Lynchburg, Virginia.

SCHUYLER A. SMITH was recently elevated as a Partner at Hamilton, Miller & Birthisel in Miami. Elected to the 2018-2019 Board of Directors of the Miami chapter of Florida Association of Women Lawyers (FAWL), Schuyler concentrates her practice on commercial litigation matters and defending, personal injury, premises liability, and products liability lawsuits.

2012

LAUREN M. SHOEMAKE was named by Super Lawyers magazine as one of its “Florida Rising Stars” in 2017. Lauren is a member of Greenspoon Marder’s litigation practice group in its Fort Lauderdale office, and focuses her practice on business litigation.

JASON SILVER was appointed in April 2017 as Vice Chair of The Florida Bar’s Student Education/Admissions to The Bar Committee. An attorney at Greenspoon Marder in Fort Lauderdale, Jason handles all facets of consumer finance litigation on behalf of financial institutions.

ALLARI DOMINGUEZ, Assistant Regional Counsel in the Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel in Fort Lauderdale, received for the third year in a row the “Hat Trick Award” from the Broward Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers for three not guilty verdicts in three consecutive jury trials.
2013

GUY K. NOA, an Associate at Buckner + Miles in Miami, was named the Admiralty & Maritime Lawyer of the Year – USA by Finance Monthly magazine, (Law Awards 2017).

ALEXANDER RODRIGUEZ, an associate at Altman & Altman LLP in Cambridge, Mass., was elected President-elect for the Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys for 2018. Licensed to practice in Florida and Massachusetts, Alexander recently earned a Master’s degree in finance from Harvard University.

2014

EDWARD J. ARMELLINO is an Assistant Public Defender within the Office of the Public Defender in Broward County. Ed was recently promoted to the Felony Division.

RICHARD KRAVETS, licensed to practice in Florida and Pennsylvania,

is an Assistant District Attorney for the Bucks County District Attorney’s Office in Pennsylvania.

ANDREW MICH is an Assistant Public Defender at the Public Defender’s Office in the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Florida.

2015

JOYNER AGUIAR is an Associate at the Joli Law Firm in Miami, specializing in immigration law.

Governor Scott Appoints Tarlika Nunez Navarro to the 17th Judicial Circuit

Tarlika Nunez Navarro ’10 was recently appointed by Governor Rick Scott to the circuit court bench in Florida’s Broward County. Prior to her appointment, Tarlika was in private practice in Fort Lauderdale, and previously served as an Assistant State Attorney for the Seventeenth Circuit. Congrats, Judge Navarro!
ENEAMI BESTMAN is an Elder Law & Fair Housing Attorney at Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County. A charter member of St. Thomas Law’s LEAD Program for recent graduates who start their own firms, Eneami was recently featured by Attorney-At-Law magazine, in which she was honored as one of its “Rising Stars.”

ANN CHARLEUS published her first book entitled, Wonder Woman Your Goals.

ALBERT LI is an Associate with Cole Scott & Kissane, P.A. in its Miami office. He devotes most of his practice to various areas of construction law, including representation of contractors, developers in construction defect claims, and design professionals.

ANDREW MERCER is an Associate at Goodis, Thompson & Miller in St. Petersburg.

LEVI L. WILKES opened his own practice in Fort Lauderdale, Levi Lawrence Wilkes, Attorney at Law, PLLC. He specializes in a variety of areas, including bankruptcy law, contract disputes, personal injury, and appeals.

PAMELA FERRETJANS opened her own law practice, Pamela Ferretjans, Attorney at Law, PLLC, in the fall of 2016.

Andres E. Vasquez ’13, a Captain in the Marines, and Ben Zeskind ’12, a Captain in the Army, reconnected again at the Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center in Charlottesville, Virginia.
2016 in Miami, where she specializes in family law and immigration matters. Pamela is a charter member of St. Thomas Law’s LEAD Program for recent graduates who have started their own solo/small firms.

**AMY FRANCIS** is an Attorney at Legal Aid of Palm Beach County in its Family Law division.

**CLAUDIA P. HUMPHREY** recently wrote an article that the William and Mary Policy Review accepted for publication. Her article is entitled *LGBTQ: Different but Equal: The Transition of the LGBTQ Community into a Third Political Party*. Claudia has her own law practice in Miami Lakes, Florida, specializing in immigration and business law, and LGBTQ rights.

**YANNY HIDALGO**, through his firm Hidalgo Law Firm, P.A., in Miami, has been selected by the international church denomination, Soldier of the Cross, with churches in 20 countries, to serve as its worldwide general counsel. Prior to attending St. Thomas Law, Yanny was a pastor at Soldier of the Cross Church in Cuba.

**JOANNA KALLINOSOS’** seminar paper, which she wrote in her Comparative Law seminar class in the 2016 spring semester, was published in DePaul University School of Law’s *Journal of Women, Gender, and the Law*, Volume 6, Issue 1. It is entitled *Refugee Roulette: A Comparative Analysis of Gender-Related Persecution in Asylum Law*.

**ALLISON PINEIRO** is an Assistant State Attorney with the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office.

**OSCAR QUINTERO** is a Court Attorney at Schenectady County Family Court in New York. He previously was an Assistant Appellate Court Attorney for The Supreme Court of New York, Appellate Division, in Albany, NY.

**IN MEMORIAM**

Brad Abramson, Esq.
Class of 2008

George Cholakis, Esq.
Class of 1989

Rose Gonzalez, Esq.
Class of 2012

Murray A. Greenberg, Esq.
Adjunct Professor

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A “Friendsgiving” Tradition

Levi Wilkes ’15 and Emma Barrios ’16 hosted a large contingent of St. Thomas Law classmates (mostly Class of 2015, and some 2016, graduates) in Fort Lauderdale in November 2017 for another “Friendsgiving” celebration.
55 Years of Service: Farewell and Thanks

DR. AMY D. RONNER, PROFESSOR EMERITUS (26 YEARS): “CONSUMMATE TEACHER, SCHOLAR, MENTOR, AND COLLEAGUE”

Professor Amy Ronner has been teaching at St. Thomas Law since 1992. Over the years, she has taught constitutional law, wills and trusts, property, criminal procedure, and several different seminars. She has also served as faculty advisor to the Moot Court Board, and been a member of various faculty committees, including Academic Standing, Curriculum, Library, and Promotion and Tenure. A Beloit College alumna, she received both her master’s and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, and her juris doctorate magna cum laude from the University of Miami. Her influence on countless students and alumni has been immeasurable. Thousands of proud St. Thomas Law alumni are successful lawyers today because of Dr. Ronner’s guidance, legal training, mentorship, and an impeccable quest for perfection in everything she did. “Professor Ronner is due a significant debt of gratitude for her excellent career as a Professor of Law,” wrote Mark Romance, Esq. ’96. “She has been one of the biggest reasons for St. Thomas Law’s success and the success of its alumni. Her passion for excellent lawyering motivated many of my classmates and me to strive for perfection and to love being a lawyer.”

At a symposium in April 2018 honoring Professor Ronner’s many contributions to St. Thomas Law, Dean Garcia remarked: “Professor Amy Ronner is the consummate teacher, scholar, mentor, and colleague. When I visited her classes, it was akin to observing a master conductor of an orchestra achieve perfect pitch, harmony, and exquisite synchronicity. Whether in the fields of law and literature, constitutional law and procedure, or therapeutic jurisprudence, her path-breaking and innovative contributions to these areas of law are too numerous to catalogue. In both quality and quantity, Dr. Ronner’s scholarship is the lodestar of our faculty. It has been an honor and a privilege to partake in Amy’s incredible journey at our law school. She has touched so many lives: students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Her work of love here at St. Thomas Law will be etched forever in our collective memories.”

PROFESSOR LARRY C. FEDRO (18 YEARS): “INESTIMABLE IMPACT ON OUR STUDENTS”

Professor Larry Fedro has served as the first and only Executive Director of the Tax Clinic since the clinic’s inception in 2000. “Professor Fedro’s career is an inspiration,” said Silvia Velazquez ’12, the tax program’s director of development and outreach. “May we strive to continue the work and legacy he established in the Tax Clinic.” An attorney with the Internal Revenue Service for 37 years prior to St. Thomas, Professor Fedro has instructed hundreds of students in the clinic, many of whom went on to receive their tax LL.M. degrees from the best graduate tax programs in the country. “Professor Fedro launched, sustained, and invigorated our tax clinic,” said Dean Garcia. “His impact on our students has been inestimable. The tax clinic exemplifies and embodies our mission and values because of his leadership. Not only is Larry a role model for our students but he is also a warm, caring, and compassionate individual. He will be missed.”

PROFESSOR NADIA B. SOREE (11 YEARS): “AN INDELIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO OUR LAW SCHOOL”

Professor Nadia Soree has been teaching at the law school since the fall of 2007, and has taught criminal law, criminal procedure, and evidence, while focusing her research and writing primarily on Fourth Amendment issues. A graduate of Yale Law School, she received her Bachelor of Music degree from The Juilliard School, and a Master’s in Music from the Mason Gross School of the Arts of Rutgers University. Prior to attending law school, Professor Soree was a professional pianist – and in the fall of 2018 she will be returning to her first love, music, as she pursues her Doctorate in Music at the University of North Texas. Reflecting on Professor Soree’s many contributions over the past decade, Dean Garcia recently stated: “Nadia has made an indelible contribution to our law school and has been a terrific colleague and friend. Although I am sad that Nadia will be leaving us, I am also happy that she will be embarking on her new academic career and resuming her stellar career in music. She will be sorely missed at St. Thomas Law.”