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ESSAYS

THE SCHOLAR: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CHANGE

CATHERINE CASIANO*

As I reflect upon the upcoming twenty-fifth anniversary of *The Scholar*, I have so many different emotions. I think about the status of our educational system, which is in a state of flux ranging from pre-kindergarten all the way through professional school. I stay awake at night thinking about the fact that the number of students going from high school to college is dropping at a concerning, precipitous level. To think that the value of higher education is being lost on so many is disheartening. On the other hand, I am surrounded by many law students who are true agents of change and want to make the world a better place. For example, a few months ago, I attended the most recent end-of-year banquet for *The Scholar* and our law students' achievements moved me to tears of pride. I was in awe listening to the thought-provoking and timely comment topics that have been selected for publication in this upcoming volume of *The Scholar*.

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I think it's easy to say, "I hope for the day that we won't need a law review such as *The Scholar*," but saying that does a disservice to those who continue to fight the injustices on a daily basis and those who are living them. So, instead, I will say that I am grateful for all of the students and law faculty who continue to work to support the mission of *The Scholar*. I will also say thank you to the founding members who had the forethought to fight for a journal that would continue to advance issues that affect underserved populations. The purpose of a law review is to inform and educate on topics of legal interest and relevance and to say that we need *The Scholar* today to do just that is an understatement.

When I started law school at St. Mary's, I was the first in my family to do so. My father is a doctor, so I recognize that privilege and the fact that higher education was not a new venture to me—but it is still daunting to be the first of anything. My dad was the first in his family to finish high school and attend college and medical school, so I will always give him credit for blazing that path for me and my sister. But still, during my first weeks of law school, I felt lost and unsure of whether I was doing anything right. Many of the first people who reached out were the second and third-year law students on *The Scholar*. This is when I first learned what a law journal was all about and specifically, the mission of *The Scholar* spoke directly to me.

When I first read the mission of *The Scholar*, I was immediately intrigued. Using the power of words to bring about awareness and change to issues that affect underserved populations was exactly what I wanted to do. I recall the selection process for staff writers was competitive and I was blessed to have been selected as a staff writer for my 2L year. After a great year as a staff writer, I was even more elated to be able to continue on the next year in an editorial position.

When I began as a staff writer, yes, I was excited to have bright pens to fix errors—especially since I am a grammar and spelling nut—but I gained so much more during my time working on *The Scholar*. My experience became a lifelong door to opportunities and friendships, and it helped me find meaning in the work I did as an attorney and now as an admissions professional in the Office of J.D. Admissions. Every day, those of us working in the admissions worlds of law schools educate future lawyers about what the law school experience is like and what they can expect. It will not surprise many to know that many students select

St. Mary's for our mission and dedication to community service—and *The Scholar* plays a large part in that.

While educating and informing are notable goals of all legal journals and law reviews, *The Scholar* has a distinct mission in publishing issues related to race and social justice. Particularly, the education field is ever-evolving. At this time in our country, many of the issues that *The Scholar* writes about are topics that—while eye-opening to some—are very painful and personal to others. As advocates for change, legal journals are vehicles to bring these issues to attention and use the law to help advance change. *The Scholar* has a real-world impact through the articles and the annual immigration symposium.

Having the opportunity to help others and change lives is why I wanted to be an attorney. I still want to make a difference and do good work. For years, I represented indigent individuals fulfilling those goals and now I am lucky enough to now work with the next generations of students who want to do the same. So, thank you and felicidades to *The Scholar*. May many more students continue the work that was started by a brave group of pioneers twenty-five years ago.