

November 2013 Networking Event Recap

Thank you to everyone who attended the event and to those could not make it, we missed you!

The evening kicked off with informal introductions and handshakes as we greeted out esteemed attorneys and alumni currently enrolled in Law School. Dr. Tayler and Professor Segall provided updates and welcome remarks. In her remarks, Dr. Tayler told the group how proud she is to be able to host an event whose attendees represent three generations of Law at Montclair State. Professor Segall reported on the success of the recent launch of the Pre-Law Internship Program and made a special point to acknowledge this year's Internship Program sponsors. He also encouraged the attendees to consider offering an Internship opportunity for our students in fall 2014.

It was with honor, that Professor Segall introduced our guest speaker, the Honorable Jose L. Fuentes, P.J.A.D., Part H., Montclair State class of 1978, Honorary Doctor of Laws 2007.

The following is the address Judge Fuentes gave to the group:

Thank you for inviting me to the Third Annual Attorney Network Gathering, which I understand is an offspring, or associated with, or complimentary to the Department of Political Science and Law, and quasi-affiliated with, but not officially sponsored by the Office of Alumni Relations. Now, if this convoluted statement is not reflective of my legal training, then I wasted three years at Rutgers trying to master the art of complicating the obvious and trivializing the momentous.

Seriously though, I do not want to leave you with the impression that I am one of those self-hating legal professionals, who in retrospect wished they had chosen any other path in life. On the contrary, I now reaffirm without reservation what I said almost ten years ago to the Association of Latin American law students at Rutgers:

“Practicing law is not always glamorous or lucrative or even intellectually stimulating. But being a lawyer is the most fulfilling experience any critically thinking person can have.”

So, with this declaration of fidelity and pride in my chosen profession clearly established, let me say that it is indeed a rare pleasure for me, as a sitting appellate judge, to have the opportunity to speak my mind in a forum outside the four-corners of a written opinion, and address a subject of my own choosing, untethered to a factual context framed by lawyers and circumscribed by the rules of evidence.

In preparation for tonight's remarks, and at the suggestions of Professor Tayler, I read the wonderful address delivered to you in 2012 by my colleague Judge Catharine Langlois to commemorate last year's annual gathering. As Judge Langlois noted then, her own personal success story as an accomplished lawyer and respected jurist was grounded in the flexible yet rigorous academic experience made available to her here in Montclair State. But her experience was not an isolated success story.

Many other talented young men and women came here in the 1960's and 70's after deferring pursuing a higher education degree. This was, after all, a highly diverse generation, many of whom had their lives disrupted by the Vietnam war or temporarily put on pause by family obligations like child rearing or the untimely death of a parent.

Judge Langlois and I were both appointed by Governor Florio in 1993, and served as trial judges during the time the New Jersey Judiciary was led by the late and great Chief Justice Robert Wilentz, an intellectual giant who fiercely defended the independence of the judiciary against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Under Chief Justice Wilentz' leadership, the New Jersey Supreme Court enjoyed an undisputed national reputation for visionary opinions that extended and protected our citizens' right to privacy, even beyond the protections afforded by the federal constitution. *State v. Hempele*, 120 N.J. 182 (1990). Today, after the advent of the internet and the proliferation of ever more invasive means of monitoring every aspect of our daily lives, any notion of privacy seems almost quaint or anachronistic.

This idea of how our sense of the world is relative to the times we share, creates a perfect segue to what I was invited to talk to you about tonight; my time in Montclair State. Noticed I stopped short of using the "U" word because for some of us, this campus will always be MSC. Indeed, unless I am misinformed, we still listen to 90.3 WMSC FM. But of course, like the passage of time, the inexorable forces of growth and progress has transformed the Montclair State College I knew in 1978, into this marvelous, modern University; Montclair State University in 2013 is a first-class public institution of higher learning, with more than double the number of undergraduate students in 1978, and offering advanced post-graduate degrees in a variety of fields and disciplines.

But I will always remember my time here as one of the great experiences of my life. The rich and diverse intellectual resources made available to us in the form of dedicated professors were matched by the academic freedom to explore, develop, and test the limits of our youthful exuberance. The college administration was led by President David Dickson, a reserved, dignified Milton scholar, who, on more than one occasion, made me the beneficiary of his wise counsel. And Dean of Students Lawton Blanton, was always available to meet with any student, any time. Dean Blanton's understated yet effective style of leadership was the perfect counterbalance to offset and diffuse potentially tense situations in those turbulent times. These two men are rightly honored today by having their names associated with buildings on campus.

We were also lucky to have had many like-minded men and women in the professorial ranks. These dedicated and talented academics created an environment that permitted first-generation college students like me to continue our education in a variety of postgraduate careers.

Many graduates of Montclair State have achieved remarkable personal success. In the list of names of those who responded to tonight's invitation I saw Andy Feede and Ken Malmud. Andy and I both attended Rutgers Law in Newark and Ken went to Georgetown. Andy is a partner at Archer & Greiner, one of New Jersey's most prestigious law firms. And although I lost track of Ken, I know he continues to practice law successfully in this state. Finally, although not here tonight, Keith Ansbacher also graduated from Montclair State in 1979, and attended Rutgers Law with Andy and I. Keith is now Vice President and General Counsel of BASF Corporation, a global chemical company that employs more than 16,000 people in North America alone.

These remarkable personal achievements are not aberrational characteristics of my generation or unique personal success stories of these individuals. As Judge Langlois eloquently stated in 2012: "All of you tonight; you are the Montclair State success story." I consider the success we have achieved to be best represented by an image of a two-sided "coin" given to us when we graduated from Montclair State. One side represents the intellectual currency of the great liberal arts education we received here. The other side represents an equally great responsibility to the students who would come after us.