

Washington Law Review

Volume 86

Number 4 *In Memoriam: Professor Paul Steven Miller*

12-1-2011

In Memoriam: Professor Paul Steven Miller. Foreword: A Tribute

Kellye A. Testy

University of Washington School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wlr>

Recommended Citation

Kellye A. Testy, *Tribute, In Memoriam: Professor Paul Steven Miller. Foreword: A Tribute*, 86 Wash. L. Rev. 695 (2011).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wlr/vol86/iss4/2>

This Tribute is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Reviews and Journals at UW Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Washington Law Review by an authorized editor of UW Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact cnyberg@uw.edu.

IN MEMORIAM: PROFESSOR PAUL STEVEN MILLER

Professor Paul Steven Miller devoted his career to the advocacy of disability rights. He served as the Henry M. Jackson Professor of Law and the Director of Disability Studies at the University of Washington School of Law, he advised Presidents Clinton and Obama, and he was a Commissioner for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Professor Miller died on Oct. 19, 2010, at age forty-nine. The Washington Law Review is honored to present the following tributes to his distinguished career.

Foreword: A Tribute

Kellye Y. Testy*

I knew Paul Miller long before I became his Dean. Even though we worked as law professors at different schools in the same city for many years, we did not meet in Seattle. Instead, we met in the hotel lobby at one of the annual Association of American Law Schools (AALS) conferences. The AALS conference takes place each year right after the new year in one of four or five rotating cities in the United States. AALS is the scholarly membership organization for legal education, is attended by thousands of law professors, and features hundreds of panels and programs on most every legal subject.

But Paul and I did not meet in one of the scholarly sessions at AALS because neither of us went to many of them. Like me, he spent most of this time in the lobby talking to colleagues from around the country as they came and went throughout the day. On the day we met, we had spent most of the day not too far from one another, each with a constant stream of visitors. Late in the afternoon, we both found ourselves alone for a few minutes and he looked over at me and said, "Well, are you going to come my way to talk or do I have to get up and come over there?" I went his way and will always be grateful I did so.

Paul and I stayed in touch from that day on, and always made a point of seeing each other at every subsequent AALS conference, joking that it was easier to get together there than in Seattle. I loved Paul's refreshing

* Dean and James W. Mifflin University Professor, University of Washington School of Law.

directness, and we shared a lot of commonalities in our intellectual and political commitments, especially around the values of public service, diversity, social justice, and equality. I especially admired Paul's work in the area of disability studies and agreed with his view that our society still has such a long way to go to achieve equality in work and social life for those who are disabled or otherwise physically challenged.

Paul and I experienced a vivid reminder of this point together in 2007 at the first conference I organized to promote diversity in law school leadership positions. Paul attended this event in order to gain insight into the process of becoming a dean. This conference was co-sponsored by the Society of American Law Teachers, a progressive organization that promotes diversity and equality in the legal academy, and most all of the speakers and attendees were committed to those values. Even so, both Paul and I had people ask "Why is he here?" It was all I could do to not respond coldly with, "Well, how many dwarfs do you see as deans of law schools today?"

When I was named Dean of the University of Washington (UW) School of Law in early 2009, Paul was serving on President Obama's transition team in Washington, D.C. During the summer of 2009, Paul and I met several times in D.C. (including a fun lunch in the White House Mess) to talk about UW Law and to give me a chance to entice him back to Seattle. He was very helpful to me in getting to know the strengths and challenges of the law school, and his insights have proven to be right on target. I will also never forget how thoughtful he was when we were due to meet for the first time after he had to have his arm amputated. He called to let me know to expect that he would "look different" and to be prepared for that but to know that he was doing fine. He did ultimately decide to come back for the 2009–2010 academic year, and I like to joke that his return proved that I was more persuasive than President Obama because the President had offered Paul several positions in his administration. Truthfully, of course, I had little to do with his decision to return to Seattle. His illness and his desire to be with his wife and his daughters were the driving factors in his decision.

Even though Paul had been battling the cancer in his arm for some time, he thought that the aggressive decision to amputate his arm would stymie its progression. As a result, when he returned to UW Law, he did so with gusto, agreeing to chair our strategic planning committee in preparation for an upcoming American Bar Association accreditation visit. I was thrilled that Paul agreed to this leadership position because he understood the university and law school well, had a thorough picture of both the challenges and opportunities for legal education in the future, and—no doubt gained from his experience in government—had an

outstanding grasp of the kind of leadership a dean most needs from tenured faculty members. When his cancer returned to his shoulder, and then even after knowing that it had metastasized to his lungs, Paul made heroic efforts to push this big project forward. He made great progress on our mission and vision statement, and our dedication to being Leaders for the Global Common Good will always have part of Paul in its charge.

When he died on October 19, 2010, I was in Japan meeting with our alumni. I spoke to him on the phone for the last time just a day before his death. Those with him said that my call energized him tremendously and after we hung up he gave them the “thumbs-up” signal. I know that part of that energy was because we were friends as well as colleagues, but a big part of it was also because I promised him that I would continue my work on issues of diversity and equality in his memory and as part of his legacy. While it is true that Paul overcame many challenges in his life, it is also true that many of those were unnecessary ones created by our biases and insecurities. Few are as strong or as accomplished as Paul; that he was able to do all he did is reason to redouble our efforts rather than to reduce them.

The tributes contained within this issue are a small indication of our great loss—and the country’s great loss—that occurred with Professor Paul Steven Miller’s passing last fall. While we are grateful for his time with us and for all he added to our personal and professional lives, we will continue to miss him far more deeply than we can express.