

Celebrating the Life and Legacy of
Melville “De” Miller, Jr.
1944 – 2021



**President and General Counsel
of Legal Services of New Jersey**
1974 – 2020

“Do well and do good.”

Melville “De” Miller, Jr.
Memorial Service and Celebration of Life
October 20, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Musical Offering by Jean Milfort

Invocation—The Reverend Bruce H. Davidson

Remarks from the Honorable Stuart Rabner, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of New Jersey

Reflections from the Bench

The Honorable Deborah T. Poritz, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of New Jersey (Ret. 1996-2006)

The Honorable James R. Zazzali, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of New Jersey (Ret. 2006–2007);

Associate Justice, Supreme Court of New Jersey (Ret. 2000–2006)

The Honorable Virginia Long, Justice, Supreme Court of New Jersey (Ret. 1994-2003)

The Honorable James H. Coleman, Jr., Justice, Supreme Court of New Jersey (Ret. 1999-2012)

Message from Dawn K. Miller, President, Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ)

Musical Offering by Luisa A. Fuentes

Reflections—A National and State Legal Services Perspective

John Tull, Retired Consultant and Former Director, Legal Services Corp. (LSC) Office of Program Operations

Alan W. Houseman, Former Executive Director, The Center for Law and Social Policy

Douglas S. Eakeley, LSNJ Board of Trustees

and Former Chairman, Legal Services Corp. Board of Directors

The Honorable Peter A. Buchsbaum, Judge of the Superior Court (Ret.)

New Jersey Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg

New Jersey Senator Raymond J. Lesniak

Reading, “Champion,” by Talena Lachelle Queen, Poet Laureate of the City of Paterson

Reflections—New Jersey Legal Services Regional Program Executive Directors

Paul Mullin, Central Jersey Legal Services (Ret.)

Michael L. Wojcik, Legal Services of Northwest Jersey (LSNWJ)

John H. Fitzgerald, Northeast New Jersey Legal Services (NNJLS)

Janice Chapin, Central Jersey Legal Services (CJLS)

Douglas E. Gershuny, South Jersey Legal Services (SJLS)

Felipe Chavana, Essex-Newark Legal Services (ENLS)

Special Tribute from Legal Services Clients and Staff

Remarks and Presentation of the Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Memorial Fund

Cynthia Jacob, Chairperson, LSNJ Board of Trustees

Karol Corbin Walker, First Vice Chairperson, LSNJ Board of Trustees

Musical Offering by Jean Milfort

*There will be a reception with light refreshments in the ballroom following the program.
Remember to collect your parking voucher from event staff.*

CHAMPION

Sometimes, when there's
a fork in the road we have no choice
but to take both roads;
The people need a champion.

A champion knows there are possibilities on every pathway.
He knows there is no room for shirking or shirkers;
He knows there is no way to choose between food, clothing, health or a home;
He knows that "case files" are people or families-- often times, both;
He Invests time, body, heart and soul in ways
that cannot be explained by nature alone.

Our champion was not a flower,
though his words were as abundant as a double bloom;

He was not a mountainous stone,
though he was, sometimes, unmovable or hardly budged;

He was not the many ways of the wind
though he seemed to be everywhere with his hands in everything;

Nor was he a mountain or a molehill,
though he tended to very large matters and matters that some didn't know mattered;

He was not a stream or a river or any life sustaining body of water,
though he knew how to be resourceful and how to be a resource for others,

He was a superman with the power of the pen,
a loving husband, he was a father, a friend;

He was the keeper of the commonwill with the will to win.
The sun is a bit brighter since he's been gone.

GOD knew what to do with his brilliance:
-let De's work and life shine as an excellent model and path for all to follow.

Melville "De" Miller Jr., You've shined a light
on some very difficult paths and taught us
in a way that only you could,
you left some well paved paths, dear leader,
but there are some paths
that we can not take with you.



TALENA LACHELLE QUEEN

State of New Jersey



THE SENATE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE HOUSE, TRENTON, N. J.

JOINT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

By Senate President SWEENEY, Assembly Speaker COUGHLIN and all Members of the Legislature

WHEREAS, The Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey note with sadness the death of Melville D. Miller Jr. Esq., known by his colleagues and friends as "De" and a dearly missed member of his Garden State community who passed from this life at the age of seventy-six; and,

WHEREAS, An illustrious graduate of Harvard Law School, Melville D. Miller Jr. lent his expertise as President and General Counsel to Legal Services of New Jersey for fifty remarkable years, and his extraordinary knowledge and unwavering determination were essential to the furtherance of this organization's noble mission to provide free legal aid to low-income individuals throughout our State; and,

WHEREAS, As one of the incorporators of Legal Services of New Jersey, or LSNJ, Melville D. Miller Jr. was instrumental in spearheading its Statewide system, a comprehensive system with a presence in every county of the State that remains in effect to this day and has offered exceptional legal representation in more than 2.6 million civil legal issues involving millions of New Jerseyans; and,

WHEREAS, For decades, Melville D. Miller, Jr. led the Statewide system to combat all forms of discrimination, and to secure economic and social justice for all disadvantaged, oppressed, and vulnerable people; and,

WHEREAS, Melville D. Miller, Jr. appeared before this New Jersey Legislature for the past three decades, educating us about the work of Legal Services and seeking additional support for the Statewide Legal Services system so that more low-income New Jerseyans could be helped; and,

WHEREAS, His legacy further extends to LSNJ's creation of the Poverty Research Institute, which developed a series of reports that highlighted the steady increase and impact of poverty in one of our nation's wealthiest States, and it is enhanced by his deep commitment to the next generation of attorneys as professionals and as way of safeguarding the future of this important work, as evidenced by his addressing each new class of attorneys for the past decade; and,

WHEREAS, His outstanding leadership, brilliance, courage, creativity, relentless pursuit of justice, and his desire to improve the lives of the less fortunate through his unshakeable belief that all people deserve fairness earned him the respect and admiration of all who knew of his great deeds; and,

WHEREAS, Melville D. Miller, Jr. shared his considerable insight with numerous national and State committees; advocated on behalf of New Jersey's vulnerable residents before the State's Supreme Court on twenty-three separate occasions, and showcased his superb writing talents by authoring *You and the Law in the New Jersey*; and,

WHEREAS, He was upheld in his journey by his beloved late wife, Louise, and he took tremendous pride in his children, Tristan, Koren, and Kendra, and delighted in his grandchildren; and,

WHEREAS, The loved ones of Melville D. Miller Jr. will always cherish his valuable and irreplaceable presence in their lives and will forever hold for him a treasured place in their hearts; and,

WHEREAS, Within all the spheres of his life and work, Melville D. Miller Jr. established a model to emulate and set a standard of excellence toward which others might strive; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

That this Legislature hereby salutes the memory of Melville D. Miller Jr. and extends profound sympathy and sincere condolences to all who mourn him; and,

Be It Further Resolved, That a duly authenticated copy of this resolution, signed by the Senate President and the Assembly Speaker and attested by the Senate Secretary and the Assembly Clerk, be transmitted to the family of Melville D. Miller Jr. Esq.


Attest:



Lisa M. Berger
Secretary of the Senate



Dana M. Buehler
Clerk of the General Assembly


Stephen M. Sweeney
President of the Senate


Craig J. Coughlin
Speaker of the General Assembly

Obituary

Melville DeSoto (“De”) Miller, Jr.

1944 – 2021

Melville DeSoto (“De”) Miller, Jr., age 76, unexpectedly passed away at his treasured Tewksbury, New Jersey, home on March 1, 2021. A man with a commanding presence, he showered us all with love, inspiration, and guidance.

De was born in Summit, New Jersey, to Frances Weinpahl Miller and Melville DeSoto Miller. De’s life was one of intense passion, family, work, love, and joy. He grew up in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, and was president and valedictorian of the first graduating Ridge High School class in 1962. He attended Amherst College, graduating in 1966.

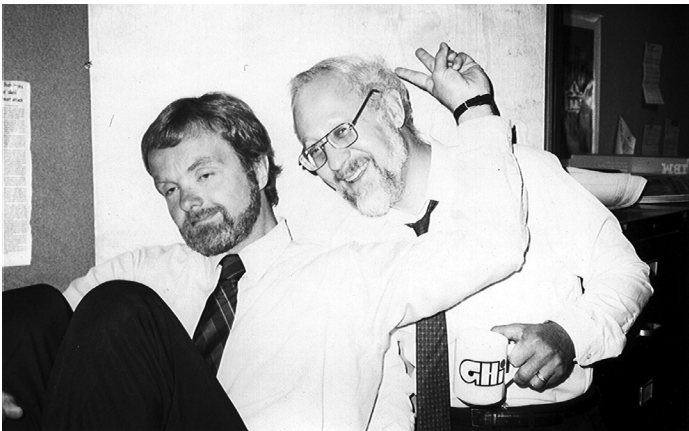
He met the love of his life, Louise Sills Barton Miller, while she was a student at Mount Holyoke College, and they married on August 27, 1966.

After attaining his JD from Harvard Law in 1969, he fought as a social justice warrior for over 50 years, critically helping to incorporate Legal Services of New Jersey in the early 1970s, and continuing as the only President and Chief Counsel for five decades, until retiring in the summer of 2020. Although retired “on paper,” De continued to be heavily involved in the work that was such an integral part of him, and he worked tirelessly to help the disenfranchised of New Jersey.

During his tenure as President of LSNJ, he achieved numerous awards and accolades, including the prestigious Award of Excellence from the Thurgood Marshall College Fund in 2008. In addition to tangible awards, he earned the respect of so many—as he demonstrated an incredible, humane, empathic, selflessly dedicated, and compassionate heart.

De was a voracious reader and an erudite logophile, and took great pleasure in his home, golf, traveling, and music of most any type.

De is predeceased by his wife of 49 years, Louise, and his first grandson, Torin Miller. He is survived by three children: Tristan Miller of Tewksbury; Koren Miller and husband Manish Bhatt of Tewksbury; Kendra Gibson and husband Theotis of Hampstead, North Carolina; and eight grandchildren: Tiernan and Taran Miller; Prem, Maya, and Jayan Bhatt; and Ariela, Miles, and Isaiah Gibson, as well as many cherished family members, friends, work family, and others, all who loved him immensely. His love for his family transcended all, and everyone knew and felt this intense love. Being ever present for birthdays, athletic events, academic achievements or significant events in the lives of his family—even safely, in the midst of Covid—his devotion to his family was abundantly clear.





Honors and Awards

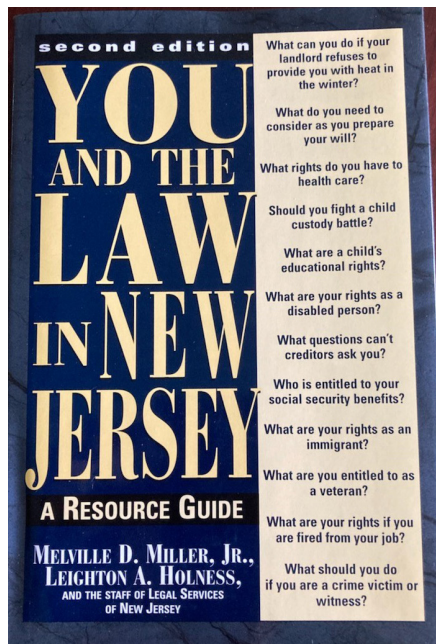
The following list includes just some of the numerous awards and honors De received. Many are hung on the walls of his former Legal Services office, now a staff resource and reading room for years to come.

- National Clients Council, Alvin J. Arnett Award (1977)
- National Legal Services Project Advisory Group Award of Achievement (1978) and Denison Ray Award (1982)
- National Legal Aid and Defender Association Reginald Heber Smith Award (1987)
- New Jersey State Bar Foundation Medal of Honor Award (1992)
- Drew University, Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (1998)
- Judith A. Trachtenberg Award for Lifetime Advocacy, Center for Non-Profit Corporations (2002)
- Award of Excellence, Thurgood Marshall College Fund (2008)
- Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of NJ – Spirit of Humanity Awards (2012)
- The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice – The NJISJ Alan V. and Amy Lowenstein Social Justice Award (2013)
- Recognition of Vision and Leadership presented as a co-convenor of the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey (2015)

Major Publications

De wrote, co-authored, edited, and oversaw the production of many publications produced by Legal Services of New Jersey over four decades. He also wrote for national journals, and published myriad studies and legal books. A partial list follows:

- Principal author of Economic Stability Initiative – State welfare reform proposal (1991)
- Changing Legal Contexts for Affirmative Welfare Reform, Fordham Urban Law Journal (1994)
- Excellence In State Support (Ford Foundation, 1995)
- Examining WorkFirst (1996)
- Co-author of You and the Law in New Jersey: A Resource Guide, a 500-page guide to New Jersey law; published by Rutgers University Press; first edition October 1988; second edition June (1998)
- Assessing WorkFirst: What Happens After Welfare? (1999)
- Assessing WorkFirst: Challenges Facing Long-Term Welfare Recipients in New Jersey (1999)
- How New Jersey's Public Assistance Dollars Are Spent (2000)
- Strengthening Families, Fund for New Jersey (2002)
- Poverty in the City of Camden (2007)
- Hard Times Amid Prosperity: A Current Profile of Poverty in New Jersey (2000)
- A Desperate and Widening Divide: The Concurrent Increase in Poverty, Income and Inequality in New Jersey (2002)
- The Critical Shortage of Affordable Housing in New Jersey: A Brief Overview (2003)
- Supporting New Jersey's Workers: The Importance and Adequacy of the State Minimum Wage (2008)
- "I Want to Make It On My Own": A Qualitative Assessment of How New Jersey's Welfare and Workforce Development Programs Can Better Perform Their Core Mission of Moving People from Welfare to Sustainable Work (2010)
- Food, Clothing, Health, or a Home? The Terrible Choices and Deprivations—and Great Courage—of New Jerseyans Who Live in Poverty (2010)
- Ghostwriting: Not a Current Ethics Concern in New Jersey, New Jersey Lawyer (2011)
- Income Inequality in New Jersey: The Growing Divide and Its Consequences (2012)
- Dozens of articles and pamphlets on legal issues and subject areas in various periodicals



Poverty Benchmarks Series

- Poverty Benchmarks 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012: Assessing New Jersey's Progress in Combating Poverty

The Real Cost Of Living Series

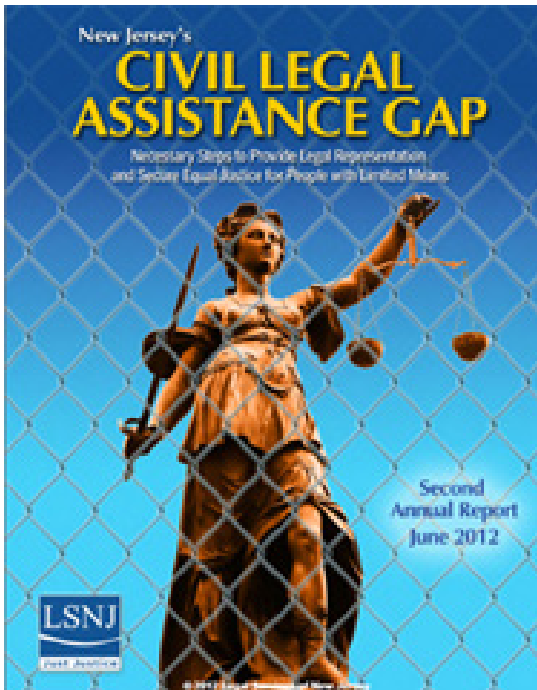
- Editions in 2008, 2013

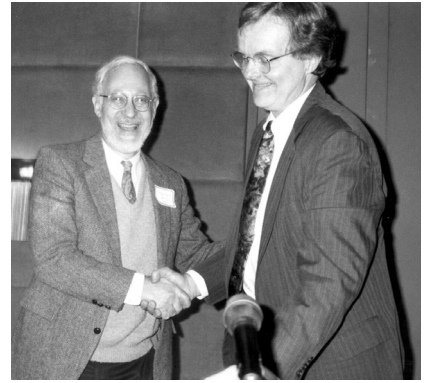
Legal Needs and the Legal Aid Gap

- Legal Problems, Legal Needs: The Legal Assistance Gap Facing Lower Income People in New Jersey (2002 and 2010)
- People Without Lawyers: The Continuing Justice Gap in New Jersey (2006)
- The Civil Justice Gap: An Inaugural Annual Report: The Shortfall in Essential Legal Aid for New Jerseyans Living in Poverty and the Necessary Steps to Secure Equal Justice (2011)
- Unequal Access to Justice: Many Legal Needs, Too Little Legal Assistance (2012)
- Civil Legal Assistance Gap: Necessary Steps to Provide Legal Representation and Secure Equal Justice for People with Limited Means (2012)
- Diminishing Justice: New Jersey's Worsening Civil Legal Aid Gap (2013)

Management Information Exchange Journal

- Legal Services: Still All about the Poverty (Spring 2011)
- A Return Visit to a Familiar Corner: What to Make of the Renewed Conversation Concerning Trying to Measure "Outcomes" of Legal Aid Representation (Fall 2012)
- Not Springsteen's "Sandy"—Lessons from the Great 2012 New Jersey and New York Surge in Blowdown (Winter 2013)





Mentor. Coach. Friend.

By Dawn K. Miller, President, Legal Services of New Jersey

De Miller's passing sent shockwaves across LSNJ's staff, Legal Services statewide, and the larger national legal services community. Yet, with the passage of a few months, we can begin to reflect and recall the memories we hold dear from a clearer perspective, and with appreciation for the high bar De set for all of us to follow. We have received many thoughts, remembrances, and condolences—from as far away as China (penned by a former LSNJ staff, hand-picked by De, as we all were at LSNJ, now a diplomat with the U.S. Department of State). In his words, this staff member owes his highly regarded career to De.

We have received many memoirs, all poignant, touching, and memorable. We choose to share the few reprinted here. Among others, we include Felipe Chavana, one of the first LSNJ attorneys hired by De, a Legal Services legacy himself, along with two others who may be less known to those in New Jersey but are icons among the national legal services community: Alan Houseman and John Tull, who generously shared their memories, impressions, and accounts of De's impact on the national Legal Services program. Having known De for over 30 years, working closely with him for much of that time, I share some cherished ruminations.

Throughout the pandemic—including all the related personal and professional losses and challenges as well as changes in nearly every aspect of daily life—the sudden and unexpected loss of De Miller will have the longest-lasting effect on the Legal Services institution and personally, on me. At times a boss, mentor, colleague, coach, goader, and friend—I miss De dearly, every day.

I could begin with “When I first met De ...” but befitting of his legacy, I learned of De before actually meeting him. While working for the UAW Legal Services Plan, I sought permission to attend the coveted LSNJ consumer training. The word came

down from De that my request would be granted, but only if I first agreed to be a training presenter, which I gladly did. That was my introduction to LSNJ. Over the next 30 years or so, I have personally and professionally benefitted immensely by working closely with, and knowing, De, and I have been truly blessed by that relationship. I had the occasion to tell him so in our many regular conversations during the transition period, which we dubbed “Thursdays with Melville” (in hindsight, a very ironic and fitting reference to the famous memoir “Tuesdays with Morrie”), as De “stepped aside” from running LSNJ. (De generously gave of his time for these conversations for which I am now even more eternally grateful.) And let me state once again for the record, Dawn Miller, no relation! De always chuckled when I made that statement.

But oh, yes, on many days (maybe even most days) working closely with De was no picnic! De was demanding of excellence and hard work and modeled beyond-human behavior daily, impossible to replicate, yet admirable, and aspirational. I am still in awe of the energy, commitment, and dedication De possessed. Often I wondered what propelled him through the universe. I asked him once, and in his reply, I first learned of the deep roots of his dedication to anti-racist and anti-poverty work: As a teenager while visiting family in the South, he witnessed firsthand the brutality of racism and being “othered.” When told he must sit in the front “whites only” section of the bus, De rebelled and sat in the back of the bus. That experience and simple act sparked a lifetime of passion towards fighting injustice from which De never waned, not for a single moment.

Whatever De engaged in, he gave 150% all of the time, and the result was always outstanding. Although he seemingly conscripted prose with ease, especially in his own writings; he would draft, re-draft, analyze,

Continued on next page

ponder, edit, and re-edit, again and again. De always sought clarity in thought and conciseness in writing and was famous for requiring that even the most complex of issues be reduced to short and simple, distilled to the “one pager.” De, the masterful strategist and philosopher, always present and hard at work.

And, if you were fortunate enough to engross De as editor, well, good for you—I have no doubt it was an unforgettable learning experience. I recall one of my first legal memos, which De edited, unmercifully. His prolific markings included so much red ink (yes, he did use red ink in those days) and lines, arrows, and indecipherable symbols and words, that it came to resemble an abstract work of art. But I was not the only one, and in later years, I proudly became LSNJ’s most trusted and expert “De decipherer,” called upon frequently by others to translate De’s markings.

De had a brilliant mind, an enviable memory, and an insatiable desire to obtain knowledge. He was an avid reader, enjoyed talking about books and authors, and had an uncanny ability to keep up with the latest events, sports, and even pop culture (on one occasion correcting us on the spelling of the artist, 50 Cent.)

There wasn’t a subject, topic, back-county country road or word spoken that De couldn’t talk about—and yes, I mean sustain a real extended conversation. My fellow travelers at LSNJ would know—we all tried to stump him on many occasions, without success. De enjoyed that challenge. Really De enjoyed any challenge. And don’t think you could beat him in a vocabulary match either—De was a great philologist.

De was so devoted to his beloved wife Louise’s care in her final years that he refused all entreaties and invites for evening events. “I have to take care of Louise,” he would say. “I promised her.” Shortly before his untimely death, he would tell me that devotion to care for his wife

was “the most important and greatest accomplishment of [his] life.” During this caregiving period, he was asked to present a speech at the retirement dinner for a treasured Legal Services executive director. To keep his promise to Louise, he asked that I present on his behalf. As if I had a choice, I agreed, but knowing De’s penchant for flowery prose, I asked that he keep his multisyllabic words to a minimum. Well, he didn’t. Always the coach, “You’ll do great,” De said. Presenting a speech before more than 100 of your closest friends is one thing; having to look up the spelling and meaning and actually practice the pronunciation of several polysyllabic words was quite another. De was good for keeping me on my toes. I did deliver that speech, and learned several new multisyllabic words in the process. That was life working alongside De: humbling, exhilarating, exhausting, but most of all, inspiring. De enjoyed being a coach and mentor, and was always teaching and learning.

I often thought that if I ever went on “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” (in addition to giving a percentage of my winnings to Legal Services), De would be my phone-a-friend. I will and do miss De, my mentor, my coach, my friend—profoundly.

Here’s another well-known fact about De: He was extremely proud of the statewide staff of Legal Services and the collective work accomplished every day on behalf of low-income people in New Jersey. I have every faith that, even as we mourn, we will continue to persevere and uplift each other, honoring De’s memory by fighting against injustice and inequality wherever it exists and embracing the values and mission of Legal Services that he galvanized and quarterbacked for nearly 50 years. (De would love the sports reference.)

To be short and simple, and in following De’s lead, we must continue to “do well and do good.”

R.I.P., Coach. ▲

A Giant and a Visionary

By Alan W. Houseman, Former Executive Director, The Center for Law and Social Policy

De was a giant in civil legal aid—a national and state leader, a visionary, and a craftsman of seminal civil legal aid documents. He founded and developed Legal Services of New Jersey, perhaps the most comprehensive and integrated civil legal aid system in the country. Today, a staff of about 600 from its offices in Edison and its five regional offices serve indigent clients in all 21 counties in New Jersey. LSNJ was also the state support entity in New Jersey and one of the original state support programs in the country. LSNJ continues innovative initiatives in state support to today.

De also helped launch the LSNJ Poverty Research Institute, which publishes data and analyses of poverty in New Jersey. The institute's work was especially important to him because it "educated the public about what poverty actually means to real people, and what people in poverty are going through," said Claudine Langrin, LSNJ's executive vice president.

In 2017, LSNJ, with De's leadership, launched the New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive, the only state equal justice library that I know of.

Among the many tributes to De from New Jersey, State Supreme Court Chief Justice Stuart Rabner praised De for dedicating his life to "helping people who desperately needed legal assistance they could not afford. Through his professionalism, passion, insight, and integrity, he made a meaningful difference in countless lives," Rabner said. "He inspired us all."

When he stepped down as president of LSNJ in 2020, De remained involved in the research institute's work, as well as the program to prevent children from entering foster care.

On the national level, De chaired the Project Advisory Group (PAG) in the mid-70s, expanded its representation, and made it into the main advocacy group that focused on funding distribution and regulatory issues at the national Legal Services Corporation.

PAG, under De's leadership, also influenced other critical LSC policies.

In 1991, he led the development of the LSC Performance Criteria and was its principal draftsman. He continued that role for the 2006 revision of the Performance Criteria. Both documents are used by LSC and other funders to evaluate civil legal aid programs and to provide the framework for funding competition.

De also was a chief advisor to Doug Eakeley, the LSC board chair during the Clinton Administration. Doug had been the board chair of LSNJ previous to his role at LSC.

De played a critical role in helping LSC envision and undertake the first Justice Gap study in 2005.

He was involved in the development of the national legal needs study conducted by the American Bar Association and was a key member of the advisory committee to the study.

He was a leader in IOLTA issues in New Jersey and nationally, and was significantly involved in efforts to require financial institutions to ensure that interest rates be both reasonable and comparable.

For an early oral history with De, see the National Equal Justice Library Oral History interview conducted by Steven Brown (November 14, 1990).

De received many awards for his service and contributions to civil legal aid, among them, the 1987 Reginald Heber Smith Award from the National Legal Aid & Defender Association.

I have been fortunate to know and work with many of the heroes of civil legal aid from 1968 to the present. I have known and worked with De since 1972. There is no one whom I revere more than De Miller both for what he has done in New Jersey and for his unique contributions to LSC and the national civil legal aid movement. He will be missed not only by his colleagues in New Jersey but also by his many friends in the national civil legal aid movement. ▲



A Moving Force

*By John Tull, Retired Consultant and Former Director
Office of Program Operations, Legal Services Corporation*

It is hard to state the measure of the loss we have all suffered with De Miller's sudden and shocking passing. I was blessed to have known De for nearly 50 years and counted him as a friend as well as a deeply admired professional associate.

I first met De when I was a fledgling project director from Tucson and he was a moving force on the national stage with the Project Advisory Group, a grassroots national organization of legal aid project directors.

The first time I saw him, he was standing in front of an elevator with a flannel shirt and hiking boots. I didn't know then who he was, but immediately recognized the unmistakable energy, intensity and presence that we all have associated with him throughout his life.

I still recall that first glimpse with clarity and vividness as if it were yesterday.

Later, I spent many an hour closeted with De and others in a—still then allowed—smoke-filled room as a group of caring legal aid leaders fought for a principled way for the new Legal Services Corporation to gather data without compromising client confidentiality. Along the way, I watched as De weighed in on the early development of national legal aid Performance Standards and helped fashion the performance measures that have become the guidelines the Legal Services Corporation applies to its grantees.

I mention these early years because they reflect what many who knew De in his later decades may not have known: that he was an instrumental force in shaping what the national legal aid movement would become across the country. The cherished value of seeking to bring change to the lives of disadvantaged and oppressed communities through committed, high

quality advocacy draws directly from De.

I cannot speak to all the arenas in which De's influence was paramount in New Jersey. I know he was deeply respected over the decades by successive justices on the New Jersey Supreme Court, by executive and legislative leaders in the state, by state and local bar leaders and, of course, by successive leaders in legal aid programs throughout New Jersey. He was looked to by all as the intellectual, political, legal and values leader of the legal aid system in New Jersey. He not only guided, nudged, and showed the way for the legal aid system over the decades, he was also its principal protector and the architect of one of the highest levels of state funding in the country.

I had the honor of working with De, and for De, and with his staff on various projects in New Jersey over the years. He never flagged in his commitment to excellence as he worked massive numbers of hours on multiple projects and fronts with astonishing attention to detail at the deepest level on every project or issue. He was, as many people have described him, a force of nature.

At the same time, De was a devoted father and husband. In spite of working prodigious hours, he always found time to attend his children's school sporting and other events. They were not isolated occasions to show the flag, but regular and devoted attendance. People in the crowd knew and recognized him because he was a regular. In the final years of his wife's, Louise's, life, he cared for her at a time of great need on her part. Any one of these aspects of De's life would have been considered Herculean, but he attended to all with incredible devotion, caring and consistency.

I, and we, will miss him. ▲

Avid Student of the Culture of Poverty

By Felipe Chavana, Executive Director, Essex-Newark Legal Services

It had been my plan all along to pen an article on De, my mentor, friend and brother, while he was living. With that opportunity now gone, I write to share with you my impressions, recollections, and feelings about De. Obviously I did not interview him for this article, so I apologize in advance and accept responsibility for any factual inaccuracies.

I first met De in June 1976 when, fresh out of law school, I interviewed for a staff attorney position at LSNJ. At that time, there were 17 local legal services programs in New Jersey. De, in addition to heading LSNJ, was also the director of Middlesex County Legal Services and served as the chair of the Project Advisory Group. The latter, an ad hoc organization of civil legal services program directors from across the country, had the mission of advising the newly established National Legal Services Corporation (LSC) as it was drafting its initial set of regulations.

Recalling my interview, it was a rather long session. De's interest was squarely focused on hearing the details, stories, and thoughts about the life struggles of people of color in my home area, the South Bronx. De, I later learned, was an avid student of the culture of poverty; his office shelves were filled with wonderful books. Later that summer, he asked that I join him at LSNJ and so I became one of its first three staff attorneys.

Among the small staff that we were, he instilled a sense of partnership while demanding that we hold ourselves accountable. He frequently asked, "What did you do for the poor today?" The message was clear: We worked for and owed our time to the poor. In that environment we each freely contributed our ideas and best efforts to the fashioning of what is now our multifaceted statewide support and coordinating program.

De's vision for LSNJ was that it address those key elements to an effective legal services system such as staff training, publications, and fundraising, which, if left to the local programs, would be an inefficient use of resources or would simply go unattended. The tenor of discussion at the first of the monthly meetings of program directors I attended made clear that De's vision for LSNJ did not enjoy universal support. Nonetheless, in an era long before the existence of an online network or emails, a community was built using the *LSNJ Report*, training events, substantive law task forces, and the annual conference.

For De, Legal Services represented the one place where, as a lawyer, he could best make a difference. He viewed the role of Legal Services as providing access to the justice system for those communities struggling with the horrors of poverty and oppression. Our mission, he would say, is to be as agents for hope and empowerment. For him, the power to effect real change laid with clients, empowered with information as to their rights, and with that, access to the justice system.

In that vein, to expand people's awareness of the law and how it could be used, he directed the publication of *Looking Out for Your Legal Rights*, LSNJ's monthly community legal newsletter. He also had us prepare self-help handbooks on tenants' rights, family law, expungement of criminal records, education, and other topics. Equally, he encouraged us to leave the office and establish ties to groups and organizations concerned with or working to help the poor. Given that license, we made ourselves available, often in support of local program staff efforts.

De also believed that educating government leaders and the general public on the devastating impact and long-term consequences of poverty was central to the fight for equal justice. One such effort involved the filing of the standard-of-need petition. That litigation sought to compel the New Jersey Department of Human Services, as required by statute, to annually inform the legislature as to the growing gap between welfare cash assistance grant levels and the cost of living. Later under his leadership, Legal Services of New Jersey's Poverty Research Institute was created and De put forth tremendous effort right up to his last days on publishing its periodic Benchmark Reports, updating poverty data, and analyzing the performance of governmental poverty programs and policies.

For De, there were not enough hours in a day for the critical work that needed to get done. During the years I was at LSNJ, (13 in total), De would regularly arrive at the office at about six in the morning to put in a full day's work before departing midafternoon to spend time with his family, usually coaching one of his children's teams. Even then, he would never leave without an accordion file or two under his arm for work at home. With that enormous work load also came much pressure and there were those rare mornings when the alarm would sound: "Whatever you do, do not go near De's door." Even so, De knew

how to laugh, including at himself. He was all ears when it came to a good joke and he appreciated a comical story.

From our many conversations, I know how much he genuinely cared for people. But he didn't just care for people, he also took care of them when they needed his help.

That we have a diverse group of regional programs is only because De was able to convince LSC that the statewide structure he created and the culture of working together could achieve and surpass all the benefits that one statewide LSC-funded entity might yield. That we enjoy a high level of state funding speaks to De's tireless efforts, year after year, to first develop the evidence of unmet need and thereafter, laboriously convincing the governor and legislature of the importance of closing the justice gap.

De and I listened to and respected one another. We fought now and then too, but that never changed our bond. I could always count on him, as he always counted on me. He was very proud of his relationship with me and I was equally proud of my relationship with him. He was such a special person and gave so much of himself right to the very end. We in Legal Services were fortunate to have had such a wonderful leader and owe his family a heavy debt for having lent him to us. Rest in peace my brother for you have faithfully completed your mission. ▲

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A Tribute to De Miller
from The Honorable James H. Coleman, Jr., former New Jersey Supreme Court Justice

Good morning, everyone. We are gathered today not to mourn the passing of De, but to celebrate his wonderful productive life. In my tribute to De, like an artist chosen to paint a portrait, I will try to paint a portrait of his wonderful life in a few minutes.

Having graduated from Harvard Law School, he clearly could have gotten a high paying job in many of the nation's top law firms. He chose, instead, to use his talent, his keen intellect, to help improve life for the poor. Although De left us at an early age, the number of years one lives are not nearly as important as the way one lives those years given to him or her. I know you agree with me that the jury of life has voted unanimously to place De into the hall of fame. It was his gentility and his professionalism that captured the hearts, the minds, and souls of so many people.

As you know, I lived an early life with many disadvantages like many of De's clients. De helped to give me the vision to be creative in finding ways to help heal some of the wounds in our society that disproportionately affect disadvantaged people, such as me.

That made De and me feel obligated to move the law to make it what it ought to be, to serve the disadvantaged people. De knew that his awarded JD Degree or retrofitted JD degree from the law school made him a Doctor of Jurisprudence. He knew that the many doctors of law have used their legal training and skills to diagnose some of the social cancers in our evolving society. Two such social cancers have been racial and gender discrimination, also known as Jim Crow-ism.

People who look like me had to ride in the back of the bus, use special railroad cars, restrooms, water fountains, marked "colored." Even though *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954, it had little or no meaningful impact on segregation at the time under the "all deliberate speed" doctrine. De firmly believed that something I was taught in law school—namely that a lawyer is either a social engineer or a parasite on society. Social engineer was defined as a skilled, perceptive, sensitive lawyer, who understands the Constitution and knows how to explore its use in improving the condition of the underprivileged.

He was able to make a huge contribution to the second civil rights movement based in part on the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voter's Rights Acts of 1965 and 1968. Those laws were very, very helpful to De in creating more racial, gender and ethnic diversity, justice, and political success. Those victories have helped to transform America, from being two nations to becoming more closely one nation by the time of De's death.

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De's approach was based largely on the mutuality doctrine that both black and white will benefit from improving the racial condition.

De firmly believed that in our law, there should be stability without stagnation, to make the law consistent with 21st century notions of justice and fair play. De believed that to fail while trying is no disgrace, but disgrace comes from not trying to make a difference. I view De's great work as a portrait of himself. De clearly satisfied Robert Louis Stevenson's test for determining whether one person's life has been a success. Stevenson said "The man is a success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of children; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who leaves the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed to express it; who looked for the best in others and gave the best he had."

We love you, De, for being you and all the things you did for us and with us for the people of New Jersey. God bless you, my friend. Sleep well knowing that we will do all in our collective power to carry on the wonderful work you so nobly advanced. God bless you, and, in that same connection, God bless you for having prepared Dawn to help carry on the work you have so intelligently started.

A Hero to Thousands and Thousands of New Jerseyans

Eulogy from Governor Phil Murphy (Televised March 8, 2021)

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the passing of this guy, last week, of a cornerstone of our state's legal community—the long-time president of Legal Services of New Jersey, and one of its founders in 1971, Mel D. “De” Miller.

For 50 years, Legal Services of New Jersey has supported tens of thousands of low-income New Jerseyans in their fights for justice in any number of areas, be it in housing, employment, civil matters, or other.

As president—by the way, up until last year when he “stepped aside” at age 75 (he did not ever call it a retirement)—De made sure that the organization stayed true to its mission of ensuring that every resident, regardless of their income or status, could seek justice.

This morning, I had the great honor of speaking with De's three children: Tristan, Koren, and Kendra, and I extended our condolences. And I told them that this guy, their dad, was a hero to thousands and thousands of New Jerseyans up and down our state. And, by the way, New Jersey set a model for the nation in Legal Services. So, his impact, his great shadow, was cast not just up and down our state, but across our country. He did so much good for so many. May God bless and watch over him.



To Say You Will Be Missed Is a Great Understatement

New Jersey Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg

I am so sad to learn of the unexpected passing of this wonderful gentleman. He was not only such a passionate believer in the mission of legal services, but he was always so kind, supportive and encouraging of those who believed along with him. My advocacy for legal services was an honour for me. Thank you Mr. Miller for accompanying me and directing me along that road. I'm sorry we didn't get that last in-person meeting, but the work you've done is an everlasting tribute. To say you will be missed is a great understatement. My condolences to his family and to his family at Legal Services.

New Jersey Legal Services Programs

State Coordinating Program

Legal Services of New Jersey
P.O. Box 357
Edison, NJ 08818-1357
732-572-9100
LSNJLAWSM statewide, toll-free legal hotline:
1-888-LSNJ-LAW (1-888-576-5529)

Regional Legal Services Programs

Central Jersey Legal Services

Mercer County	609-695-6249
Middlesex County	732-249-7600
Union County	908-354-4340

Essex-Newark Legal Services	973-624-4500
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Legal Services of Northwest Jersey

Hunterdon County	908-782-7979
Morris County	973-285-6911
Somerset County	908-231-0840
Sussex County	973-383-7400
Warren County	908-475-2010

Northeast New Jersey Legal Services

Bergen County	201-487-2166
Hudson County	201-792-6363
Passaic County	973-523-2900

South Jersey Legal Services

Centralized Intake for SJLS	800-496-4570
Atlantic County	609-348-4200
Burlington County	609-261-1088
Camden County	856-964-2010
Cape May County	609-465-3001
Cumberland County	856-691-0494
Gloucester County	856-848-5360
Monmouth County	732-414-6750
Ocean County	732-608-7794
Salem County	856-691-0494

Thank you for attending this celebration of the life and legacy of De Miller. His memory will live on through the work of Legal Services throughout New Jersey, and in the lives of all who knew him.



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