

Mercedes Colwin and Gordon & Rees:

Reaching Back to Diversify the Legal Profession

by META J. MEREDAY, Senior Writer

“Diversity means broadening the horizons of others through learning about respective cultures, customs and beliefs,” states Mercedes Colwin, Managing Partner of the New York and New Jersey Offices of Gordon & Rees, LLP, which was founded in 1974 and has grown with over 290 attorneys in eleven offices with a “reputation for success and an unfailing commitment to excellence.” Colwin brings her own stellar background to the firm and to the diversity agenda.

“As minorities obtain more empowerment in our national economy, there is a greater demand for minority lawyers. Diverse business owners are seeking representation and, frankly, it is good business for lawyers to stay ahead of the curve and strive to diversify their firms.” Colwin strongly advocates for increasing the number of minority and women lawyers. “Besides serving my clients in commercial business and employment litigation, I manage and spearhead the growth of our East coast offices. I chose Gordon & Rees because they believe in promoting and retaining talented women and minorities in the field.” Gordon & Rees has a strong commitment to diversity and its efforts have been recognized. “I serve on the Firm’s diversity committee and the Chairman, Jack McCowan, and firm wide Managing Partner, Michael Lucey provide leadership and support in developing mentoring programs, and actively participating in recruiting through sponsorships with minority legal associations.” Gordon & Rees’ commitment to diversity was most recently recognized in 2005, when they were awarded the “Defense Research Institute (DRI) Law Firm Diversity” Award.

DRI is the nation’s largest organization of defense trial lawyers and corporate counsel.

In the last year, Colwin, one of the top national legal news analyst for Fox News Channel, was named by Forbes Business American Airlines as one of the six most influential women in America, which included former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. She also received Notre Dame’s prestigious “Graciela Olivarez” Award for “outstanding achievement as a leading Hispanic lawyer of the highest ethical and moral standard who exemplifies commitment to community service.” Her strong beliefs

are rooted in her personal inspirations. “When teachers tried to steer me away from my goals my late mother, Mercedes Tirado Colwin, consistently told me not to listen and strive to achieve. She was widowed at 45 years of age with six children and worked three jobs to keep us together and ensure that we were all educated. All of us graduated with professional degrees and are productive members of society. I will never forget her sacrifices and her legacy continues on.” Colwin’s commitment to helping others also has a parental connection. “Losing my father at the age of eight has shaped my entire life. I always try to help those in need because I don’t know if the opportunity will arise again. I



Mercedes Colwin

live by the phrase ‘What man can perceive, man can achieve’. The world is filled with possibilities for achievement. If you are committed to expending blood, sweat and tears in its pursuit, chances are the sacrifices will be rewarded.”

Mercedes Colwin and Gordon & Rees strive to diversify the legal profession with professional excellence and community service. □