

# Blazing New Trails

LANDERS ACHIEVES A FIRST AS HEAD OF BBA



Landers '85 says promoting diversity is important, but it won't be the only focus of her term at the Boston Bar Association.

**H**ow does Renée M. Landers '85 respond to the label "woman of color," as in "first woman of color to lead nation's oldest bar association"?

"It's good in some ways," says Landers, forty-eight, who took the helm of the Boston Bar Association (BBA) in September 2003. "It's a signal to other people that they can do what they want, even if no one like them has ever done it before." On the other hand, she worries that it can be "too narrowing." Promoting diversity is a dearly held goal, but she emphasizes, "it's not the only thing I know about, or care about, or do."

The litany of things Landers knows about, cares about, and does is formidable. But this is not immediately

apparent from her convivial demeanor as she speaks by telephone from the house in Watertown where she lives with husband Thomas Barrette Jr. '82, and their eight-year-old son.

"I have to be honest. I don't do everything equally well," insists the Harvard graduate who at age twenty-four sprinted into the higher ranks of Massachusetts state government, and after practicing and teaching law was drafted by the Clinton administration to fill posts in the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Landers is a former president of Harvard University's Board of Overseers and sits on a fistful of boards of prestigious hospitals and schools, in addition to her workload as associ-

ate professor at Suffolk University Law School and her new responsibilities at the BBA.

For as long as Landers continues to find herself—all too often—the only person of color in a roomful of decision makers, boosting diversity at all levels of the legal profession will remain the primary goal of her presidency.

Her plans for the organization also include getting more legal academics involved in order to foster a freer flow of information between the profession and the academy.

So perhaps Landers is stuck with the "woman of color" tag for now. But she reflects: "People who know me, know that I'm more than that characterization. So it doesn't really bother me."

—Jane Whitehead

## HAPPENINGS

### HUMANITARIAN ABROAD—

The Holocaust/Human Rights Project invites Colin Gonsalves of the India Center for Human Rights and Law in Bombay to present his research on police misconduct, racial crimes, sexual harassment, and the rights of indigenous people and prisoners.

**BIG ADVICE**—At the Dean's Lunch series alumni share their post graduation experiences with students. Speakers are James M. Micali '73, president and chairman of Michelin North America; Albert Notini '83, CEO of Manufacturers Services Ltd.; William T. Baldwin '75, president and owner of Pillar Financial Advisors; and Christopher Mansfield '75, senior vice president and general counsel for Liberty Mutual Insurance Company.

**HE'S NOT HEAVY...**...he's my brother. Cameron Kerry '78 promotes the presidential candidacy of sibling John Kerry '76. Hadassah Lieberman, wife of presidential hopeful Joe Lieberman, discusses her husband's campaign. Candidate Dick Gephardt's daughter Chrissy stomps for her dad.

**ADVISING CLINTON**—Clinton administration counselors Beth Nolan and Lisa Brown revisit their White House years. Getting Clinton, the former law professor, up to speed on legal issues wasn't difficult, says Nolan, the first woman to serve as chief legal counsel to a president. "You couldn't use your law school magic, hoping he would say, 'Oh, okay, you're the lawyer.' That didn't work."

**GOING TO BAT**—Mary Holper '03 and former clinic fellow Abira Ashfaq are among the honorees at the Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project annual benefit.





## [ GALLERY ]

### Kali Billingslea '04

**D**uke University '95. 1st Circuit Lt. Governor, American Bar Association, Law Students Division. Convention coordinator, National Black Law Students Association.

#### **WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR CAREER?**

When I was a project manager for IBM, an article on my wall said, 'The new path to CEO is project management.' But when I realized after five years it wasn't what I liked, I had a quarter-life crisis: What do I do now?

#### **HOW DID YOU DECIDE ON LAW SCHOOL?**

After the 2000 presidential election, when both sides were still contesting the results, an IBM colleague said to me, 'I saw this guy arguing in front of the Supreme Court, and that's what you're supposed to do.' I'd never told her I'd thought about law school. Right then, I just knew. It was January 12. Within a month, I'd taken the LSAT and applied to schools.

#### **YOU'VE BEEN DRAWN TO THE COURTROOM IN YOUR CLINICAL WORK. WHY?**

A very small portion of the population deals with corporate lawyers. The courtroom is where justice happens for most people. I love being in the courtroom and trying to find solutions for my clients. There was no reason to leave my job at IBM and go in a different direction if I wasn't going to follow my heart.

**WHAT'S NEXT?** My ultimate goal is to open a sports management firm with friends from Duke. You don't grow up with four brothers in the South and not like sports. There are so many young people who get exploited by the sports machine. I think we could help them make better decisions.

—Interviewed by April Otterberg '06