

SPOTLIGHT ON ALUMNI

Mark Gray II : Family Legacies, Generational Lawyering and Giving Back

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“I WAS ONE OF MARK’S 1L PROFESSORS AND RECENTLY SPENT TIME WITH HIM TO TALK ABOUT HIS LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE, HIS FAMILY LEGACY AND HIS CAREER TO-DATE. “

Growing up, Mark Gray II heard a lot of “lawyer talk” in his family. Having two parents who are lawyers (Mark Gray and Angela Newell Gray ’94) certainly influenced his decision to pursue a legal education, but for Mark, that was only a small part of a family legacy of lawyering. Mark grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina and graduated from Grimsley High School. From there, he headed to N.C. State University where he majored in Sports Management with minors in Psychology and Spanish. His ultimate goal was to become a licensed sports agent upon graduation and passing the bar. With a mother and grandmother (Dottie Newell ’74) who’d attended NCCU School of Law, as well as an aunt (Regina Newell Stephens ’87), an uncle (Michael Newell ’09), and another aunt who’d been employed by the law school (Pamela Newell), NCCU was high on the list. An academic scholarship tipped the scales and made NCCU School of Law the obvious choice.

What was less obvious to Mark, at the time, was the grind required to be successful. “I was under the impression that I’d get by with little effort. My first semester grades quickly dissuaded me from

that impression as I almost flunked out,” Mark remembers. With the help of his professors, who recognized his potential and challenged him to put in the work necessary to be successful, he quickly rebounded. Mark reset his mind and energy and turned things around second semester. After graduation, he applied the same work ethic to preparing for the bar exam.

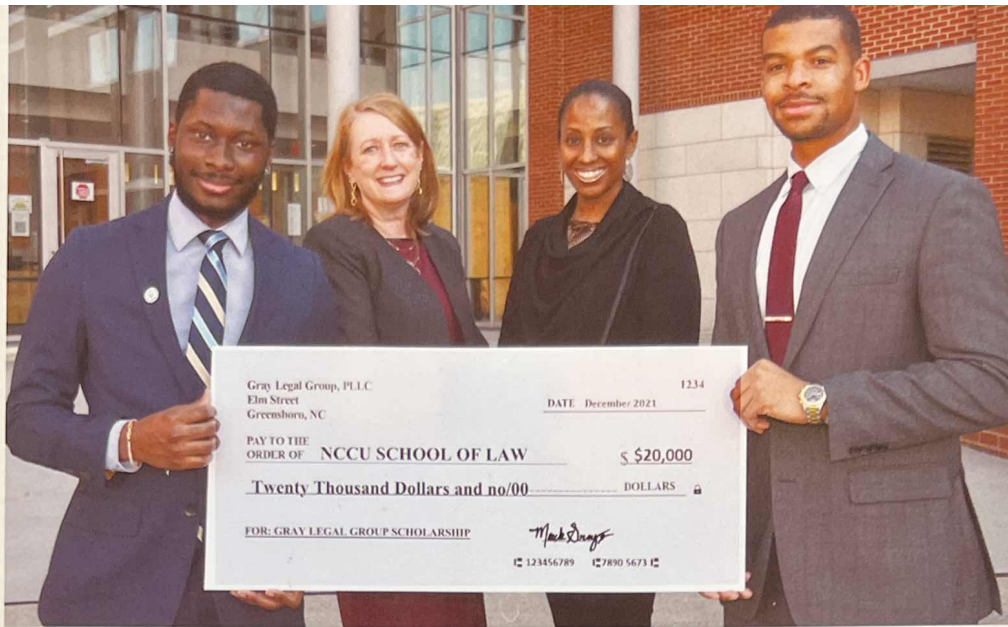
“Seeing my uncle, Michael, graduate and pass the bar on the first try put the pressure on to succeed and I needed that push,” says Mark.

“*The scholarship I got from Dean Douglas impacted my decision to attend NCCU and I want to have the same impact on students that come after me.*”

While his family’s tradition of attending NCCU School of Law (and the academic scholarship he received from Dean Stephen Douglas) may have encouraged Mark, once at NCCU, the professors and culture of support and encouragement were the highlights on

his time at the law school. “Seeing the pictures on the wall of the people that came before me made an impression on me. I liked the fact that I was a legacy [at NCCU] and part of a unified community.”

Upon graduation, Mark went on to practice in Greensboro at the Gray Legal Group, the law firm his father, now retired, had started in 1991. Mark was interested in many different business endeavors and legal areas, but the opportunity that he couldn’t pass up was taking over the family



firm and practicing law in the community where he grew up. Mark credits his father for being a great legal mentor and the strong reputation of the Gray Legal Group for providing him with a chance to begin his legal career in an existing practice, as opposed to encountering the challenges associated with building a practice from scratch. “I’m fortunate to have inherited 30 years of legal experience and reputation that just made my process a lot smoother,” says Mark.

Since taking over the reins at Gray Legal Group, Mark’s practice has focused primarily on personal injury. In October, 2021, NC Lawyers Weekly reported on a landmark wrongful death case Mark settled on behalf of the estate of a woman leaving behind a young son. Driving on I-40, the young woman’s car broke down. While awaiting roadside assistance inside her car with emergency blinkers on, her car was hit by a tanker truck. Although the details of the settlement are sealed and subject to a non-disclosure agreement, Mark shares that it was “a horrific accident and sad case leaving a young son without a mother.” The suit reached a multi-million-dollar settlement. Mark decided then that big wins and big cases provided a unique opportunity to give back to the community. It also confirmed for Mark that institutions matter.

In his local community, Mark and Gray Legal Group have sponsored canned food drives incorporating the local middle schools and students into a competition with a monetary prize for the school receiving the most donations and a winter clothing drive for under resourced individuals in Greensboro. In December,

2021, Mark established the Gray Legal Group Scholarship at NCCU School of Law. Mark made an initial donation to the scholarship of \$20,000 and anticipates similar donations in the future to keep the scholarship active. Unlike an endowed gift, Mark expressed the desire that the entirety of the donation be allocated each year to law students who may have a financial need or who are outstanding scholars.

“The scholarship I received from Dean Douglas impacted my decision to attend NCCU School of Law and I want to have the same impact on students that come after me,” Mark said.

When he’s not practicing law or working on his real estate development endeavors, Mark loves to travel to places where he can hone his Spanish skills. In addition to the offices located in downtown Greensboro, Gray Legal Group maintains a satellite office in Charlotte, NC and if you drive east on I-85 from Durham to Charlotte you’re likely to see Mark’s face on a billboard or two. Mark has done a lot since graduating almost five years ago and, as he looks to the future, he plans to build on the foundation of Gray Legal Group and take it in new and diverse directions. By embracing his family’s legacy, he is now able to build his own legacy of giving.

And, as for advice he’d offer incoming students? **“Take it seriously from the jump because it goes by quickly.”**