

REFLECTIONS: HOW NOTRE DAME LAW SCHOOL MOLDS LEADERS OF GLOBAL DIVERSITY

*Max Siegel**

The World Athletics Championships are coming to the United States for the first time in July of 2022. The event will showcase 2000 of the greatest athletes on the planet, representing over 200 countries in the ultimate track-and-field experience. As the Chief Executive Officer of USA Track & Field, the national governing body for the sport of track and field, I am responsible for overseeing the professionals who will deliver flawless execution of the event, field the number one team in the world, and engage the global community in an inspiring competition that has long-lasting cultural impact.

The positioning of the United States as a potential host for this event began with my first assignment as the CEO in July of 2012. World Athletics (formerly known as the International Amateur Athletic Federation) was founded in 1912 by seventeen national athletic federations, including the USA, which saw the need for a global governing authority. In the summer of 2012, I was sent to our world headquarters in Monaco to represent the United States at the 100-year anniversary celebration of the international-federation founding.

Upon landing in Nice, France, I was whisked away by my hosts and put in a helicopter for a short ride to Monaco, then escorted to the motorcade that would take me to the event hosted at the royal palace by our sports chair,

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* Nationally renowned sports and entertainment executive, Max Siegel became the fourth CEO of USA Track & Field on May 1, 2012. He has led USATF to financial growth and programmatic evolution that are unprecedented in the Olympic family, generating over \$500 million in revenue and expanding the USATF annual budget to a record \$40 million. He had successful stints as President of Global Operations at Dale Earnhardt Inc. where he sold tens of millions of dollars in sponsorship; and as Senior Vice President at Sony/BMG and President of Zomba Gospel, Tommy Boy Gospel, and Verity Records where he led one of the most profitable divisions in the Sony BMG system. As the owner of Rev Racing since 2010, he has led NASCAR's Drive for Diversity (D4D) program to bring more multicultural and female talent to the sport, advancing it from a fledging effort into a competitive juggernaut on the racetrack. He is an accomplished author of three books and a film producer. The first African American to graduate with honors from Notre Dame Law School, Siegel is a native of Indianapolis.

Prince Albert of Monaco. Over the course of the evening, I engaged with political and sport leaders from around the world discussing our sport's impact on culture. There was universal acknowledgement of how sport unifies us all and how sport has been at the center of progress of human rights, social justice, and diplomatic relations.

On the plane ride back home, I was overcome with emotion as I reflected on the experience and the enormity of my responsibility. I was humbled and honored to be the CEO of USATF; yet, I was in a bit of disbelief. I was the only African American CEO in the United States Olympic movement. I was born into poverty, the product of a broken marriage from parents who did not go to college. I experienced a range of emotions thinking about the fact that the leaders of our organization saw fit to choose me to lead the entire sport.

What I realized was my path to this leadership role and the preparation for my professional journey all started as a student at the University of Notre Dame Law School.

It seems like a week doesn't go by where I don't reflect upon Dean David Link's greeting to our first-year law class. Dean Link talked about developing the "Notre Dame Lawyer." The dean spoke about the importance of values, being a part of a special community, and how each of us had an opportunity to make unique contributions to society. Law school was challenging to say the least. I, however, didn't have to look far for inspiration, guidance, encouragement, and support from the community.

There were so many committed alumni like the Honorable Ann Williams, the Honorable Roland Chamblee, and the Honorable Willie Lipscomb who spent countless hours mentoring us. Then there were faculty members such as Professors Patty O'Hara, Dwight King, Jay Tidmarsh, Matt Barrett, Tex Dutile, and so many more who selflessly taught and invested in building our professional foundation. But I will always be grateful to my classmates with whom I shared my law school journey, and together we worked to make the school a more diverse and dynamic community. I marvel at the work of some of my amazing classmates: Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren, ViacomCBS Executive Vice President Mickey Carter, Cultural Influencer/Journalist/TV Host Sunny Hostin, Chief People Officer Mark Watley, to name a few.

My wife and I have been friends since the seventh grade. She has devoted her life to improving the lives of others through her work as a pediatric dentist, as well as her commitment to our community. My wife did her undergraduate training at Spelman College, one of the premiere historically black colleges. We would talk often during college while she was at Spelman and I was an undergraduate at Notre Dame. Fifteen years later, she attended a weekend at Notre Dame with me for a Law School Advisory Council meeting. As the weekend concluded and we walked the campus, she shared with me her feeling about how special Notre Dame was and her observation

of how it had transformed so many lives of its alumni. She also was deeply moved by the connection we all had to the school and the entire Notre Dame community. My wife commented that if more African American students knew the impact Notre Dame had on the lives of its students and alumni, they would want to go to school there.

That moment took me back to my time as a student and how we as the Black Law Student Association lobbied the administration to work collaboratively with them on a focused, deliberate, and personal campaign to recruit African American students. Our collective efforts resulted in one of the largest African American student enrollments in the school's history at that time. What it taught me is that to achieve true diversity there must be a proactive, sustainable, and consistent effort to attract and retain diverse students, faculty, and staff.

Notre Dame is a special place and unique place. The institution is made up of a community of people who share a common set of core values. The values of accountability, teamwork, integrity, leadership in excellence, and leadership in mission are universal. These values are manifested through the impact of the work that so many of Notre Dame's alumni do each and every day around the world.

While the benefits of true diversity are undeniable, they unfortunately don't always happen organically. The events of the past year have truly reminded us all that we are at both an inflection point and a tipping point in society where matters of human rights, social justice, and race relations are at the forefront of everything we do. We have to prepare our leaders to engage in effective and constructive dialogue. We must be compassionate, patient, and understanding as we confront global issues that are affecting society at large and also impact the global economy.

In order for Notre Dame Law School to continue to lead globally by example and develop thought leaders and agents of change, it must build the most diverse community and deliver a curriculum and professional development opportunities that are responsive to the needs of the students, faculty and staff.

We are all at our best when we are a part of the most diverse community. Diversity of thought, experience, and perspective leads to the absolute best outcomes. As the Notre Dame Law School continues its efforts to build a diverse community, I want to encourage the members of our Notre Dame Law School community to:

1. Get personally involved by sharing their talents, resources, and insights with the entire law school community to enhance the experience of all students, faculty, and staff. Our entire Notre Dame community benefits when we are all connected.

2. Make a personal commitment to helping the law school achieve its goals and lead in the area of diversity. I encourage us all to assist in the recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff by being a resource to the law school community.

3. We should support our Notre Dame Law School community in the pursuit of excellence and professional development of its faculty and staff to meet the needs of a diverse community.

It is by staying tethered to the Notre Dame Law School's core principles and achieving the most diverse law school community that our alumni will continue to shape global policies, impact the economy, and transform global communities to better humanity.