

Singing Judge

Multitalented attorney lays down the law and the beats in Grenada.

By Chris Marshall

When **Jerry Seales** retired as chief magistrate judge in Grenada in 2018, news sites described him as a “thorn in the side of traffic violators” for his “strict sentencing” and “hard adherence to the law.”

With 30-plus years of experience and a reputation for harsh punishments, the results that come up when you type his name into YouTube may come as a surprise. When Seales, '88, isn't settling disputes in the courtroom, he pursues another passion, recording songs and music videos like “Simple Life” and “Darling Butterfly” that are a combination of Caribbean blues, country, and reggae.

If it's hard to picture a laid-back reggae singer living a double life as a stickler for the law, there is an explanation: the native of St. George's, Grenada, often handed down sentences with the intention of improving the community, which is why reckless drivers were frequently tasked with cleanup duties at a local school, church, or cemetery.

“During my tenure of office in the post of magistrate, I was able to make a meaningful contribution to law and order and justice in Grenada,” said Seales, who ruled on civil, family, and juvenile matters in the country's Southern district. “Of the over 7,000 cases done by me – 1,860 traffic cases in 2016 alone – there were only two or three lawyers with clients complaining.”

Musician and magistrate are just two of the hats Seales wore after returning to his home country with a degree from Washburn University School of Law. He served in Grenada's Senate from 1992-95 and was a coroner until 2018. He is an honorary consul for South Korea, facilitating Grenada's diplomatic relations with the country, and was appointed a justice of the peace in 2001.

The foundation of his diverse career was built at Washburn, which he attended in part because Forbes Field Airport was nearby and allowed him to remain in the United States Air Force.

“That education was just truly amazing. It was an opportunity to serve in the military and get a great education,” he said, “and



Jerry Seales, '88. Photo submitted

at the same time, interact at the highest level of lawmaking and laws.”

Seales recalled valuable one-on-one time with professors Bill Rich and Ron Griffin, followed by real-world training as an intern for Eugene Anderson, the only Black senator in the Kansas chamber in 1987. The proximity to Kansas City, Missouri, didn't hurt either, Seales said, because he was able to make regular trips to reggae nights at the Grand Emporium on Main Street.

The combination of judicial and musical experiences Seales absorbed while at Washburn remains useful to this day.

“I carried a great deal of my professors' teachings with me to my career on the bench in Grenada,” Seales said. “My Washburn Law education was a great asset; I can see that clearly.”