

March 28, 2025

[Get Involved](#) [Submit a Class Note](#) [Join FSU Law Connect](#) [Make a Gift](#)

## From the Dean



Last Friday, the FSU College of Law hosted its **third annual Business Law Review Symposium, focused on "Encapsulating Product Packaging Trade Dress."** The event, which attracted over 500 attendees both virtually and in person, brought together leading intellectual property scholars and practitioners to discuss the protection of trade dress—the distinctive packaging, colors, or designs that define a brand's identity.

The symposium, led by FSU Law **Professor Jake Linford**, featured insightful panel discussions on how companies establish and protect their trade dress rights both in the U.S. and internationally. The panels also explored the consequences of infringement and the evolving role of intellectual property in brand identity protection. Audience questions were answered throughout the day, sparking engaging discussions and offering further depth to the topics covered.

**Professor Peter Yu** from Texas A&M School of Law, a renowned expert in international IP law, kicked off the event with a session on the global landscape of trade dress protection. He was joined by FSU Law **Professor Fred Abbott**, whose expert commentary further illuminated the complexities of the subject.

Next **Professor Janewa Osei-Tutu** from the University of Miami School of Law focused on the societal impacts of intellectual property rights, particularly in developing countries, with commentary from **FSU Law's Lauren Scholz**, who emphasized the broader implications of IP in global contexts.

Professor Linford presented on trademarks and trade dress in the U.S., challenging traditional doctrines through his research and was joined in the discussion by FSU Law **Professor Jacob Eisler**.

The event then shifted to the practical challenges companies face when defending trade dress in high-stakes litigation. **J. Michael Keyes**, a partner at Dorsey + Whitney LLP, shared valuable expertise in this area, with FSU Law **Professor Justin Sevier** providing further context and analysis to enhance the conversation.

The symposium wrapped up with **Felicia Caponigri**, a visiting scholar at Chicago-Kent College of Law and a guest scholar at the IMT School for Advanced Studies in Lucca, Italy, who provided a thought-provoking exploration of trade dress within cultural and fashion law, underscoring the significance of color and design in shaping brand identity. **Ruth Vafek**, a partner from Berger Singerman, contributed insightful commentary, highlighting the intersection of fashion, culture, and intellectual property.

FSU Law students from the **Business Review Law Journal** also played an instrumental role in assisting and supporting the symposium.

For those who missed the event, the full recording is available for viewing. **Click here** to watch the recording.



Dean Erin O'Connor

**In Memoriam: Michael Halpern ('76)**



Michael Halpern, 72, of Key West, passed away on Monday, December 30, 2024 after a short bout with bladder cancer. The Key West community lost an active, vibrant and sometimes controversial citizen. A Celebration of Life ceremony was held on Saturday, January 11, 2025 at the Coffee Butler Amphitheater.

Mike was originally from New York City and earned his bachelor's degree from Binghamton University. Upon moving to Florida, he was awarded a master's degree in business and Juris Doctor degree from Florida State University.

After graduating from law school, Mike served as an assistant public defender for the Monroe County Public Defender's Office and served as President of the Monroe County Bar Association. He evolved into an influential attorney, a behind-the-scenes power, a developer, a successful businessman, entrepreneur and hotelier as the owner of the Southernmost House Hotel on Duval Street. Just months before his death, Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Mike to the Lower Florida Keys Hospital District board.

Mike developed his gem of a hotel from the 1897 Southernmost Mansion, which he renovated and operated as a boutique hotel with 18 rooms. He and one of his sons opened the popular Seaside Cafe at the Mansion. He is reported to have greeted his guests by telling stories about the Mansion having hosted Thomas Edison, Al

Capone, Tennessee Williams and 5 presidents. He recently opened the Sky Bar, a rooftop bar atop of the Mansion. Mike was reported to have single-handedly turned the unsightly uppermost block of Duval Street into an art-filled pocket park self-funding a cure to the street's frequent flooding.

Mike and I did not have much contact after law school aside from calls about development issues on which I was working. During law school I was blessed with playing basketball and other sports with Mike and just buddying around with him and other students. When playing tennis, he won every match. He was a really good classmate. The summer after our first year of law school I drove 2 friends to New York to visit with another member of our class, future Escambia County Judge Dave Ackerman. Mike invited me to stay at his Mom's hotel. So, when we arrived in New York in my VW van, I popped out of the van barefooted to meet Mike's mom, in her perfect New Yorker twang she announced, "My God you have no shoes!", but Mike quickly responded, "it's OK Mom . . . it's just Lonnie."

Many reported statements at the time of his death are a testimony to his importance to Key West. "I certainly lost one of my best friends," said former Key West City Attorney Shawn Smith. Former Key West City Commissioner Edwin Scales who now serves as a Judge on the Third District Court of Appeal, also a close friend, said "Michael was a terrific lawyer, a terrific father, a terrific philanthropist and a great friend."

In terms of his philanthropy, Mike was reported to be paying for 12 to 15 kids' college tuitions at the time of his death and that each year he paid off all the unpaid lunch balances at Key West schools and gave about \$10,000 so a high school band would raise enough money for a trip to London. Nick Wright, headmaster at Somerset Island Prep, reported that "When Michael learned that a librarian at Key West High School was bringing in a dozen or so peanut butter and jelly sandwiches each afternoon for kids who would otherwise go home to a house with no food, he launched Food for Thought under the umbrella of the foundation to give kids food to take home at the end of the day."

Mike's wife, Michelle, lost her own battle with cancer in 2011 after a devastating, decade-long battle. Mike is survived by his sons Rafe, Alexi, Luke and their adopted brother Terry. Following Michelle's diagnosis and during her battle, Mike helped the boys launch their own nonprofit, Kids Fighting Cancer, which still raises money to help local cancer patients pay their bills while undergoing treatment. The organization's annual Willy Wonka Chocolate Festival at the Southernmost Mansion has raised more than \$100,000.

**- Tribute written by FSU Law alumnus Lonnie Groot ('76)**

## **Faculty in the News: Michael Morley**



**Michael Morley**, FSU Election Law Professor and Faculty Director of the Election Law Center, was featured in two articles this week.

*Bloomberg Law* quoted him in their article, **"Push to End National Injunctions Prompts Concern Over Rights."** The article discusses the implications of limiting district courts' ability to issue national injunctions.

He was also featured in a *Politifact* article titled **"Was Zelenskyy's Pennsylvania visit 'election interference'? Why experts say no."** The article delves into the ongoing debate surrounding foreign election interference.

## Faculty in the News: Jacob Eisler



**Jacob Eisler**, James Edmund and Margaret Elizabeth Hennessey Corry Professor was featured in a video panel interview on *NTD*, a New York-based, global television network, titled, **"Legal Panel Analysis: Lower Courts Blocking Trump's Executive Orders 'Extraordinary' Because They're Shaping Federal Policy."**

He was joined on the panel with Curtis Hill, former attorney general of Indiana to discuss the implications of the orders on executive policy.

[Click here](#) to watch the video.

## FSU Law in the News: Alternative Spring Break

FSU College of Law's Alternative Spring Break program was featured in *The Florida Bar News* in an article titled, "FSU Law students' labor produces appreciation and advocacy for farmworkers."

The article was written by 3L Hannah Robinson who has attended the trip twice.

*"It's a rare opportunity to gain exposure to both the legal and human aspects of the issues facing Florida's farmworkers. It only takes a few hours working in a greenhouse to understand that agricultural labor requires endurance, efficiency, and strength simultaneously. It is work that all Floridians should appreciate more consciously during this National Farmworker Awareness Week and throughout the rest of the year."*



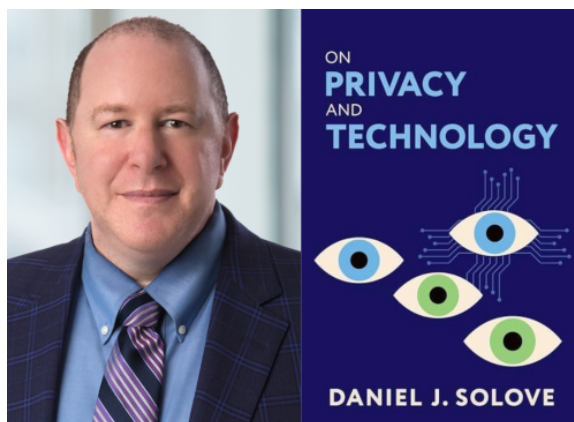
[Click here](#) to read the full article.

## Book Talk: Daniel Solove, "On Privacy and Technology"

Join us today at 12:30 p.m. for a virtual Book Talk with [Professor Daniel Solove](#) from George Washington

University Law School discussing his book, "[On Privacy and Technology.](#)"

Professor Solove will be in conversation with [Lauren Scholz](#), McConaughay and Rissman Professor at FSU College of Law. Solove is one of the world's leading experts in privacy law.



[Click here](#) to register.

## Alumni News: Alexcia Cox ('05)



Congratulations to alumna [Alexcia Cox](#) who was recently sworn in as the newly elected State Attorney for Florida's 15th Judicial Circuit!

In this pivotal role, she leads a dedicated team of 115 prosecutors and 180 professional staff members across five offices throughout Palm Beach County.

A proud native of Palm Beach County, Cox's distinguished legal career spans nearly two decades.

Over the course of her career, she has successfully prosecuted hundreds of high-profile cases, including first-degree murders, domestic violence felonies, elder abuse, child abuse, and other violent crimes.

## Alumni News: Laverne Lewis Gaskins ('93)

Congratulations to alumna **Laverne Lewis Gaskins** who recently attended the 69th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York as a representative of the American Bar Association!

The event brought together countries from around the world and centered on a critical review of the Platform for Action originally adopted in 1995.

Gaskins is an accomplished attorney with a private law practice based in Augusta, Georgia, where she specializes in arbitration.



## Alumni News: Kat Klepfer ('14)





Congratulations to alumna and Florida State Law Research & Access Services Librarian **Kat Klepfer** on winning the **Service to SEALL Award**! The Service to SEALL Award recognizes and honors a member of the Southeastern Chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries (SEALL) who has made special, significant, and sustained contributions to the chapter.

**SEALL** is a not-for-profit organization incorporated in Florida with the purpose of promoting law librarianship and developing and increasing the usefulness of law libraries, particularly those in the Southeastern area of the United States.



We invite all alumni and students to [join FSU Law Connect](#), a platform exclusively for the FSU Law community. Alumni can keep in touch with the College of Law and other alumni, post jobs, and access career development tools. If you haven't already joined FSU Law Connect, please join today and start connecting.

---

[ABOUT US](#) | [ACADEMICS](#) | [ADMISSIONS & FINANCIAL AID](#) | [OUR FACULTY](#) | [ALUMNI](#) | [CAREERS](#) | [STUDENTS](#)



*If you unsubscribe from the FSU Law Focus, you will only be unsubscribed from the newsletter and not other emails from FSU Law.*

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt Out](#) using TrueRemove™  
Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.  
View this email [online](#).

425 West Jefferson Street | Tallahassee, FL 32306 US

This email was sent to .  
*To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.*



[Subscribe](#) to our email list.