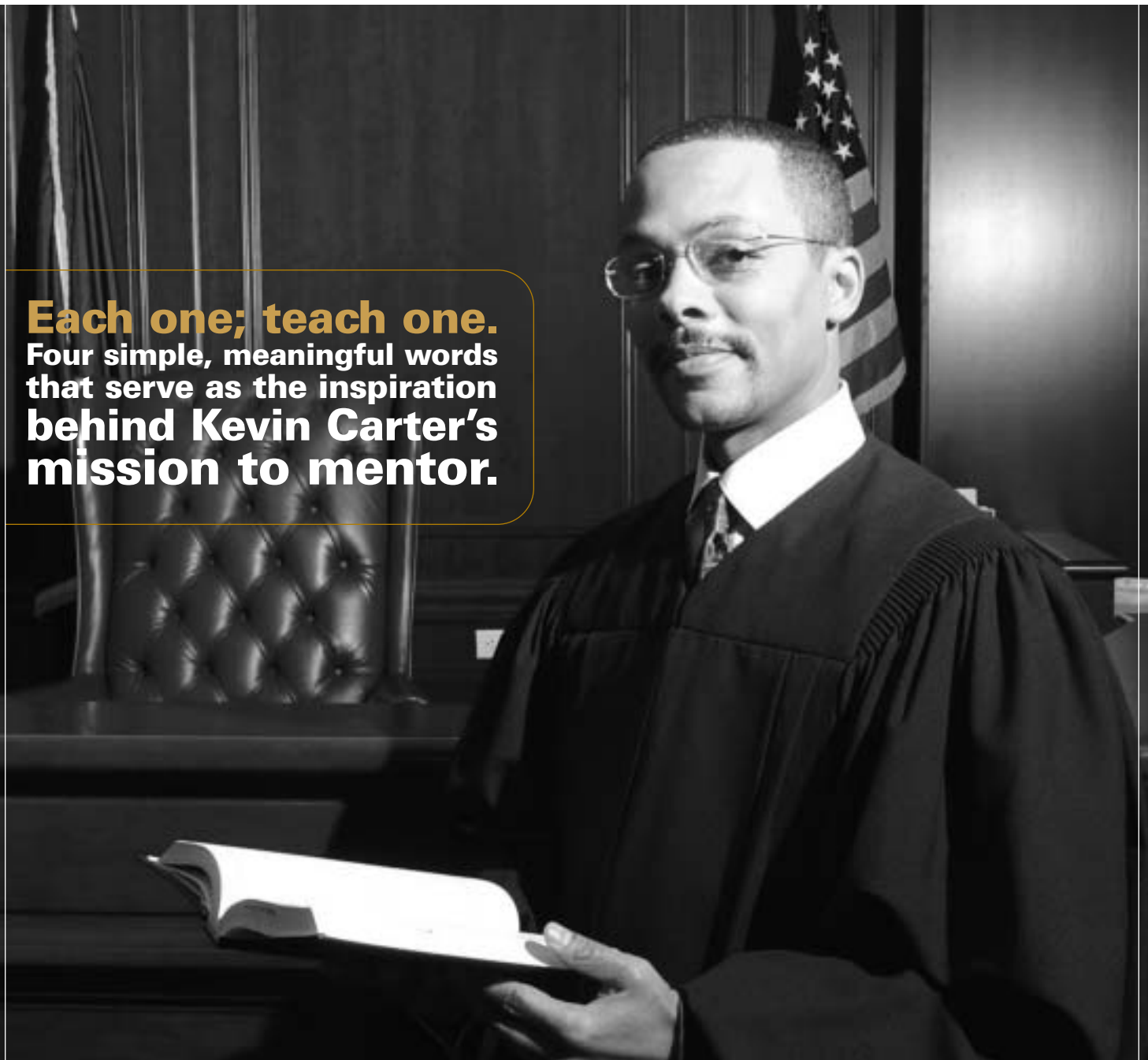


On A Mission To Mentor

Each one; teach one.
Four simple, meaningful words
that serve as the inspiration
behind Kevin Carter's
mission to mentor.



Erie County Family Court Judge Kevin M. Carter '86 uses his personal story of perseverance to mentor at-risk youths – both on and off the bench.

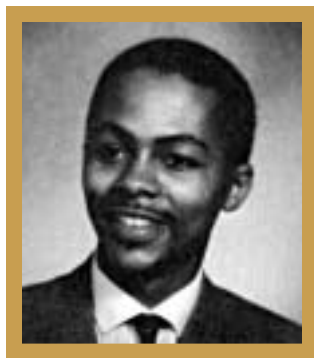
Each one; teach one. It was back in the 1970s when **Kevin M. Carter '86** was growing up on Buffalo's East Side that he first heard those words at the Masten Avenue Boys Club. It wasn't the club's motto, nor was it emblazoned on a wall. Rather, they were four simple words imparted by the boys club employees to the young men they served whenever the opportunity arose. For Carter, who is now an Erie County Family Court Judge and mentor for at-risk youths in Buffalo, they became words to live by.

"I've learned that you can have an impact simply by talking with young people, sharing your story and letting them know that life is about hurdles, which they can overcome," says Carter. It's a lesson he learned firsthand by conquering his own hurdles, including getting a college education. Not just any college education either, notes Carter, but a Jesuit education from Canisius College. "When I was young, the institution of higher learning everyone thought the highest of was Canisius. It was almost like Harvard."

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When Carter was growing up, most young adults in his neighborhood were encouraged to find a job after high school and take care of their family. "The majority of African Americans who attended Canisius back then were athletes. If you weren't an athlete, the assumption was you were either wealthy or had super grades."

Carter had neither wealth nor super grades. And when he told his guidance counselor at East High School about his dream to become a lawyer, she steered him toward "something he was good at" instead: art school. After 18 months, he left art school and applied to Canisius. His



Kevin M. Carter as pictured in the 1986 *Azuwur*.



application was rejected but that didn't deter him. What Carter lacked academically, he certainly made up for in persistence. He enrolled in developmental courses at Daemen College and went on to complete a two-year program at Villa Maria College. In 1983, Carter reapplied to Canisius – in person.

"I met with the people in the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)," says Carter. "I told them my background was replete with developmental courses, I had no money but I was a hard worker and I had the desire to be at Canisius. All I needed was for them to give me a chance."

And they did. The HEOP Office helped Carter with a financial aid package and at age 23, he attended his first class at Canisius College, fulfilling a personal goal and an earlier promise he made to his former East High School Principal, the late

William D. Bennett '61, MS '67. Once called an "educational visionary," Bennett was an assistant professor of teacher education at Canisius, the college's first African American athletic coach and a former president of the alumni association.

"I became close with Bill Bennett during my junior and senior years in high school because of

"All I needed was for them to give me a chance."

a negative circumstance," explains Carter. "I was doing something wrong and he could have expelled me but he didn't." Instead, Bennett sentenced Carter to a promise that he would pursue his education and achieve his goal of becoming a lawyer.

Carter worked full-time in a bank while pursuing his philosophy degree at Canisius and then went on to U.B. Law School. While earning his *juris doctor* and working part-time as a tutor at Riverside High School, he helped dozens of teenagers graduate from high school and get into college. Among them were Craig Hannah '92 and Maurice McNab.

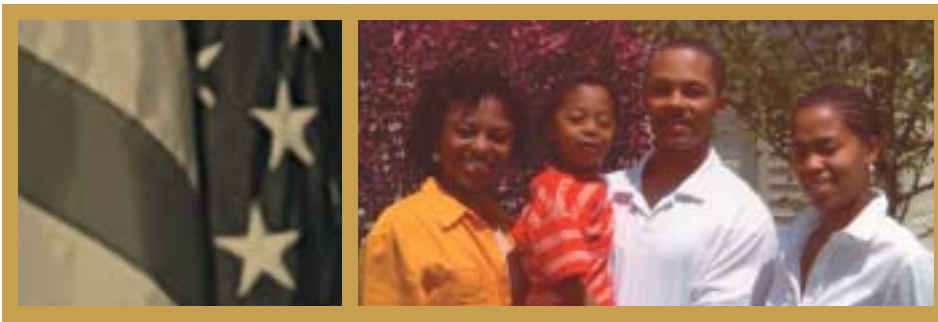
"Kevin was a big part of my decision to become a lawyer," says McNab, a public interest attorney in South Carolina. "He helped me focus on my school work. He saw something in me and helped instill the importance of professionalism and personal responsibility."

"Kevin was really the first positive male role model I had outside my family," adds Hannah, an attorney in the corporation counsel's office for the city of Buffalo. Ten years his junior, Hannah knew Carter from Winslow Avenue, where they both grew up. "He helped me fill out the application and personal statement for law school and actually took me over to U.B. to meet with the admissions committee."



Carter notes, "Once I began tutoring at Riverside, it confirmed for me how important the each one; teach one philosophy really is."

Carter went into private practice after law school and continued to serve as a mentor to at-risk youths in the community. He returned to the Masten Boys Club to tutor a new generation of teens. He also founded the Kevin M. Carter Attorney Internship Program for African American high school and college students interested in pursuing law degrees.



The Honorable Kevin M. Carter '86 poses here with his two children, Marcus and Cavina, and his wife, Regina (Gibbs), a 1991 alumna of Canisius College whom Carter met in Bouwhuis Library while studying for the Bar Exam.

By 1999, his efforts in the community caught the attention of U.B. law school professor and prominent local attorney Richard Sullivan, who invited Carter to come work with him. Surprised and honored by the invitation, Carter agreed and became an associate and a law guardian with the firm of Sullivan, Oliverio & Gioia, where he represented the rights of children. There he learned that "misery does not discriminate by race or socioeconomic status." It was during his time at the law firm that Carter also helped establish the (former) African American Lawyers Youth Basketball League, which provided a safe place for some 150 at-risk youths to spend their Friday nights. The teens "played basketball and received some much needed guidance" from the lawyers who ran the league. Carter recalls one particular legal case in which he convinced then Family Court Judge Sharon Townsend to put his client (a young man in serious trouble) in the basketball program, rather than behind bars. The teen not

only graduated from high school but became an all-star basketball player and earned a scholarship to play at SUNY Stony Brook.

"The judge gave him an opportunity as opposed to taking away an opportunity," explains Carter. "She gave him a chance to do the right thing and because of that, he is

better for it and so is society.

That's just one example of how a judge can have a positive impact on the life of a child."

Carter keeps this experience close in mind now that he is a family court judge. Appointed by Governor George Pataki in June 2002 to fill a vacancy on the bench, Carter went on to win a 10-year term in the November 2002 election. His new position has enabled him to further his mentoring efforts and introduce more positive

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role models in the community. He is currently working to start a teenage tutoring program at 1491 Enterprises, originally established to assist senior citizens. He is leading a campaign to bring an arm of the world-renowned, non-profit organization 100 Black Men of America Inc. to the Buffalo region. The agency's mission is to ensure the future of minority communities by providing resources towards youth development. Carter is also considering using his own money to fund a small scholarship.

Combined, his community efforts equal that of a full-time job and one that Carter balances with his personal responsibilities as a husband to Regina (Gibbs) '91 and father to Marcus, age 5 and Cavina, age 23 – a second generation college graduate in the Carter family. Coincidentally, both his personal and professional efforts have brought him full circle and back to the institution he fought so hard to get into. But this time he is not a student. Carter serves as a member of the college's Board of Regents. He is also an adjunct professor of criminal justice, teaching in Old Main 111 – the same room he took a logic course in during the early 1980s. To him, it's like coming home.

"You want to come back and give something to the institution that you feel played a major role in your life," says Carter.

And that is exactly what he's doing. While teaching courses in criminal law and criminal procedure, Carter is also encouraging Canisius students to pursue their education to the fullest and use their knowledge to help others.

Each one; teach one. Four simple, meaningful words that serve as the inspiration behind Kevin Carter's mission to mentor.



Kevin Carter:

- ★ Graduated from Canisius College with a degree in philosophy (1986)
- ★ Earned a *juris doctor* from U.B. School of Law (1989)
- ★ Entered private practice in 1991 and concentrated on domestic relation law, personal injury, criminal and real estate cases
- ★ Founded Kevin M. Carter Attorney Internship Program for African American high school and college students (1991)
- ★ Co-founded the former African American Lawyers Youth Basketball League (1993)
- ★ Joined law firm of Sullivan, Oliverio & Gioia (1999), where he served as law guardian appointed to represent children
- ★ Elected to 10-year term as Erie County Family Court Judge (2002)
- ★ Appointed to the Canisius College Board of Regents (2002)

