In March 2015, Farkhunda Malikzada’s death caught the world’s attention. Just 27 years old when she was falsely accused of burning the Quran, the Afghani woman died at the hands of a vicious, all-male mob that beat her, set her on fire and threw her in the Kabul River.

Kimberley Cy Motley, who became the first foreign lawyer working in Afghanistan when she signed on to a State Department legal education program in 2008. “As I travel, I see how abnormal the legal system is in so many countries,” Motley told UWM Alumni. “I want to raise the capacity of legal representation worldwide while continuing to educate needy people of their rights. For as abysmal as it can be, you never give up hope. Where would Motley’s quest for justice and human rights in some of the world’s most remote courtrooms and corrupt prisons began in Milwaukee, where she earned four college degrees in six years, including bachelor’s and master’s degrees in criminal courtrooms and corrupt prisons began in Milwaukee, where she earned four college degrees in six years, including bachelor’s and master’s degrees in criminal law. After she completed her education with a Marquette Law degree, she became a Milwaukee public defender. Her time at UWM was marked by “extremely encouraging” faculty and staff. She had two of her three children while a student. Her social welfare education also made a difference. “At UWM I learned how to research social issues and the importance of publishing. That definitely helped me in Afghanistan, especially when I performed an assessment of their juvenile justice system,” she said. Afghanistan may be just the first stop of Motley’s larger journey. Word has spread of her passion and unique capabilities and she is expanding her services and mission to India, Uganda Bolivia and more.

Travel won’t be required for anyone who wants to follow Motley’s international quest for justice. A Danish-made documentary, “Motley’s Law,” will premiere at the Chicago International Film Festival in October and a TV series based on her life is currently in the works.

Looking back on Milwaukee

Motley grew up in Milwaukee’s Barryland Housing Development and attended Whitnall Bay High School. After she completed her education with a Marquette Law degree, she became a Milwaukee public defender.

Culture and education are two of Motley’s passions. “As I travel, I see how abnormal the legal system is in so many countries,” Motley told UWM Alumni. “I want to raise the capacity of legal representation worldwide while continuing to educate needy people of their rights.”

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If You Go

The HBSSW has graduated more than 10,000 family members, FBI agents, school social workers, police chiefs, community advocates and more, providing southeastern Wisconsin with a unprecedented force of social welfare experts. In recognition of the college’s 50th Anniversary, the school invites alumni, friends, faculty and supporters to a student scholarship gala. Please join us.

October 15, 5:30 p.m. Harley-Davidson Museum

Guest speaker: Kimberley Cy Motley, international human rights lawyer and alumna

Cost: $100. Sponsorship opportunities range from $200 to $15,000

For registration information and a complete calendar of events, please visit uw.edu/socialwelfare/about/timeline/

Or contact: Richard Kessler, kessle23@uwm.edu or 414-229-6890
Alumni Office, Oliver@uwm.edu or 262-383-1129

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