

Sincerely,

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

*Columbia Law School's official portrait of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg '59,
unveiled in 2001, painted by Constance P. Beaty.*



TO HONOR JUSTICE GINSBURG
ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HER
INVESTITURE TO THE SUPREME COURT,
COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL IS FOR THE
FIRST TIME PUBLISHING A PORTION
OF ITS PREVIOUSLY PRIVATE PAPERS.

There is very little about the indomitable Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg '59 that hasn't already been chronicled in films, books, magazine profiles, news stories, and even song. A leading architect of the modern day women's movement and the fight for gender equality, Justice Ginsburg has made her mark over decades as a brilliant legal strategist and litigator. Her advocacy and jurisprudence have transformed the legal landscape. In 1993, she ascended to the pinnacle of the profession when she was appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States by President Bill Clinton.

Now a pop-culture icon known as "Notorious RBG," she holds a rarefied place in American history. She also stands alone in the history of Columbia Law School: Justice Ginsburg graduated tied for first in the Class of 1959 and shattered a glass ceiling when, in 1972, she became the first woman to join the school as a tenured faculty member.

The Columbia archives contain letters, remarks, and memos to University presidents, Law School deans, and colleagues—as well as their replies. These documents illuminate Justice Ginsburg's fierce intelligence, sharp legal mind, and lifetime commitment to gender equality and women's rights in her personal and professional lives. They also reveal the deep respect and affection she expresses for her colleagues, mentors, friends, and family. To honor Justice Ginsburg on the 25th anniversary of her investiture to the Supreme Court, Columbia Law School is for the first time publishing a portion of its previously private papers. These materials are eloquent and emphatic testimony to her unparalleled influence on the institution and to the enduring bond she and the Columbia community share to this day.



“I am very proud of my Columbia degree and politely declined to trade it in for one from Harvard when that became an option years later.”

AUGUST 5, 1980

Remarks delivered at Columbia Law School Alumni Association reception and dinner in Honolulu, Hawaii

After Ginsburg completed her first two years at Harvard Law School, she decided to move to New York City because her husband, Marty, who had recently graduated from Harvard Law, landed a job as a tax lawyer with Weil, Gotshal & Manges. Harvard, Ginsburg said, informed her that if she took the third year of law school at another school, it would be “out of the question” for her to receive a Harvard degree. She challenged the logic of that decision by arguing that the school awarded degrees to its transfer students who also spent only two years there.

“If Harvard ruled years one and two would not do for a degree, what could I expect from Columbia?” she worried at the time. Fortunately, Columbia “had no rule,” and she was “accepted without reservation.” In 1959, she was not only awarded a Columbia Law School degree but also tied for first in her graduating class. Years later, in 2011, she accepted an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Harvard.

"The suggested amendments marked in red on the enclosures might stimulate women graduates to respond more favorably to your fund appeals."

DECEMBER 17, 1971

Letter to the Columbia Law School Annual Fund Office

Ginsburg took a red pen to the solicitation letter she received from the national co-chairmen of Columbia Law School's 21st Annual Fund while she was a professor of law at Rutgers University. After adding "or her" wherever the letter's authors had used "his," she mailed the edited version back to the Law School with the politely worded cover note.

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

435 West 116th Street • New York, N.Y. 10027

Telephone: (212) 280-2661

21ST ANNUAL FUND

Dear Classmate:

The National Co-Chairmen of the 21st Annual Fund recently sent you a summary of the Law School's budget and their review, based on that budget, of the School's needs for the coming year. Many of their points were elaborated in a report of Dean Sovern's that appeared in the November issue of the Columbia Law Observer (student financial aid, junior professor salaries, student clinical legal education programs, and the graduate program).

These materials make clear the School's pressing need for increased funds for all these areas including the increases in the salaries of its junior professors. Last year Dean Sovern alluded to the School's susceptibility to raids on its junior faculty from institutions able to pay fully competitive salaries. As this Fund year begins that risk has become reality. At the end of the 1971-72 year the School will lose two of its fine young faculty. We can all understand their perspective: they have families, New York is a very expensive place to live, and they are not even being paid as much as comparable men at the other institutions. If the School does not adjust, it will surely face similar losses in the future. Nothing is so damaging to our School's reputation as the loss of able men. And replacements are hard to come by, it is increasingly difficult to attract the best young teachers to New York.

The root of this predicament is not hard to find. The graduate starting on Wall Street earns around \$16,000, roughly comparable to what the School can pay an assistant professor. But whereas the practitioner can look forward to rapid and lucrative advancement, the young teacher must face a long and arduous climb to a plateau which flattens out in the neighborhood of \$30,000.

Another factor must be considered: financial pressure reduces the amount of time a teacher can devote to the scholarly pursuits that are indispensable to his development and the School's standing as an intellectual institution of the first rank.

Enclosed is a summary of our class's results last year.

While the need which has been expressed is large, it can certainly be met if each of us willingly supports the School to the extent of his ability. I hope you will join in this worthy pursuit without delay.

Sincerely,

Lennard K. Rambusch
Lennard K. Rambusch

Gerry P. Watson
Gerard P. Watson

December 15, 1971



"I was introduced as [the] first of
'many women professors the faculty
expects to have.' ... Although it
will be difficult to live up to the
advance notices, I look forward
to my Columbia association with
much enthusiasm."

FEBRUARY 10, 1972

Letter to Columbia University President William J. McGill

On January 21, 1972, Columbia Law School Dean Michael I. Sovern (Class of 1955) announced to the faculty that Ginsburg had accepted an appointment as professor of law—the first woman to join the Law School as a full-time tenured professor. This news reverberated beyond the academy and legal community. "Columbia Law Snares a Prize in the Quest for Women Professors," read the headline in The New York Times on January 26, 1972, which called the appointment a "major coup."

“Over the years, many women have ranked among the law school’s most distinguished graduates. Yet until now no serious effort was made to recruit obviously qualified women for faculty positions. That record is no accident!”

MARCH 1, 1972

Letter to Columbia University President William J. McGill

Six weeks after accepting Columbia Law’s offer to join the faculty—but four months before the appointment began—Ginsburg chastised the university’s president for comments he made in an interview with The New York Times about federal equal opportunity regulations that would compel Columbia to consider race and sex when making employment decisions. Ginsburg was upset that McGill had insinuated that she was an affirmative action hire. “[It] conveys an impression I am sure you did not intend,” she wrote on letterhead from Rutgers University, where she was still teaching.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY *The State University of New Jersey*

SCHOOL OF LAW • NEWARK
180 University Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07102
Tel. 201-648-1766
Writer’s Direct
Dial Number:

March 1, 1972

PRESIDENT’S OFFICE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

MAR 6 1972

ROUTED *WJm*
REPLY RECEIVED
CENTRAL FILES

Dr. William J. McGill
President
Columbia University
New York, New York 10010

Dear Dr. McGill:

The NEW YORK TIMES report (February 27, 1972, p. 25) conveys an impression I am sure you did not intend. The concluding remarks attributed to you appear to put the emphasis in the wrong place. Over the years, many women have ranked among the law school’s most distinguished graduates. Yet until now no serious effort was made to recruit obviously qualified women for faculty positions. That record is no accident!

Women candidates with pride in their achievements do not seek "reverse discrimination". They respect independent-minded colleagues. But "independent-minded" is an inappropriate characterization for a mental set still prevalent that assumes the superiority of male candidates. Mr. Pottinger attempted to explain the Government’s position in a comment that appeared in the NEW YORK TIMES on December 18, 1971, p. 29: "The idea that qualifications are the primary standard for hiring is at the heart of the Executive Order that H.E.W. enforces."

Description of the "women’s movement" as "narrowly based" reflects a misunderstanding. Sweden’s Prime Minister, Olof Palme, put it this way: "In order that women shall be emancipated from their antiquated role, the men must also be emancipated. Thus it is human beings we shall emancipate. The aim must be that men and women shall be given the same

Supreme Court of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20543

CHAMBERS OF
JUSTICE RUTH BADER GINSBURG

Dear Family, Friends, and Colleagues of Edith Spivack:

Were the first Monday less close, I would surely be with you this afternoon to celebrate the life of a truly great lady and lawyer, Edith Spivack. Edith graduated from Columbia Law School the year before I was born. It was a time few women were bold enough to aspire to careers at the bar. Decades later, when I graduated from Columbia Law School, Edith was already a model for the women who followed in her way.

When Edith and I first met, I was astonished. This trailblazer was petite as can be, even smaller in size than I am. Her example persuaded me that one need not have an imposing bearing, or a loud voice, to be an effective lawyer, and a steadfast contributor to the welfare of the communities law exists to serve. Throughout her years at the bar, Edith ranked among the most dedicated, the least selfish of those privileged to engage in the practice of law. I count it my great good fortune to have known her as my *sympathique* older sister-in-law.

May all gathered here continue to draw inspiration from her work and days.



Ruth Bader Ginsburg

“When Edith and I first met, I was astonished. This trailblazer was petite as can be, even smaller in size than I am. Her example persuaded me that one need not have an imposing bearing, or a loud voice, to be an effective lawyer, and a steadfast contributor to the welfare of the communities law exists to serve. ... I count it my great good fortune to have known her as my *sympathique* older sister-in-law.”

SEPTEMBER 14, 2005
Tribute to Edith Spivack, Class of 1932

Spivack was one of the pioneering women who enrolled at Columbia Law School in 1929, after it had begun accepting women just three years earlier, in 1926. After graduating in 1932, Spivack was rejected by law firms, she said, because she was a woman and she was Jewish—two obstacles Ginsburg also faced. So Spivack volunteered at the New York City Law Department before she was hired there (initially at half salary) in 1934 as assistant corporation counsel. She became a legend in the legal community, serving with distinction at the Law Department for 70 years and retiring at the age of 94. Spivack was a role model for Ginsburg; the two were often together at various bar and Columbia Law School gatherings. “Edith was a truly grand human being,” she told Dean David M. Schizer in a letter.

"In those days, I was rather diffident, modest, and shy. Hans was the ideal person to help me overcome those traits. He encouraged me to speak in public, to write for law journals, even to take over his civil procedure class for a week. He was my rabbi in 1972, when Columbia at last decided tenured women belonged on the faculty."

MAY 10, 2001

Introduction of [Professor] Hans Smit, Class of 1958,
at a Columbia Law School Alumni Association dinner in Washington, D.C.

Hans Smit was a world-renowned authority on international arbitration who was a professor from 1960 until his death in 2012. He led Columbia's Project on International Procedure, and in 1961 hired Ginsburg as a researcher and associate director. She admired Smit as a scholar and mentor and greatly appreciated his many talents and personal passions, "his fluency in several languages, his water polo championships, his collector's eye for all manner of fine art, his skill as a bargainer, his astute real estate acquisitions and remarkable buildings and home renovations." She remained in close touch with Smit over the years, as she did with many Columbia professors who became valued colleagues, mentors, and friends.

MAY.10.2001 1:56PM SC

NO.182 P.2

Hon. Ruth Bader Ginsburg's in. D., presented by
Dean David Wechsler
(Ginsburg missed the dinner due to illness)

Introduction of Hans Smit
Columbia Law School of Washington, D.C.
Alumni Association Dinner at La Colline
May 10, 2001

We have just entered the heaviest work season at the Court — the weeks when all opinions not yet out (opinions in about half of the term's argued cases) must be completed and released before we leave town. It is a time to stick close to one's desk. But when I received the announcement of tonight's dinner, I had no will to resist. I immediately mailed in my reservation and volunteered to welcome the evening's distinguished speaker, the inimitable Hans Smit.

My fondness for Hans dates from our first encoun-

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20001

RUTH BADER GINSBURG
UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE

October 10, 1986

Mr. Peter D. Ehrenhaft
President
Columbia School Alumni Association
of Washington, D.C.
1015 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 1000
Washington, D.C. 20005

RECEIVED
OCT 14 1986
LAW SCHOOL
DEAN BLACK'S OFFICE

Dear Peter:

When I joined the Columbia Law School faculty in 1972, it was understood that no meetings associated with the Law School would be held at clubs that discriminate in admissions on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or sex. Other groups with which I am affiliated, for example, the American Law Institute (see enclosure), follow the same policy. Has the Cosmos Club opened admissions to women? If not, I am distressed that CLSAAWDC has scheduled a lunch program (for SEC Commissioner Edward H. Fleischman, October 23, 1986) at that place, and suggest an immediate change of venue.

Sincerely,

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

cc: Barbara Black
Harriet Rabb
Edward Fleischman

P.S. I continue to protest when invitations like the enclosed one from CLSAAWDC arrive, to the annoyance of friends and acquaintances, even former faculty colleagues. Georgetown University Law Center dropped lunches at the Cosmos Club some years back, and even the ABA meets at the International Club instead. I am surprised that the D.C. Columbia Law alumni group is insensitive on the issue. (This is the first time in six years I received a notice that Columbia law people are meeting at the Cosmos Club!)

"When I joined the Columbia Law School faculty in 1972, it was understood that no meetings associated with the Law School would be held at clubs that discriminate in admissions on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or sex. ... I am surprised that the D.C. Columbia Law group is insensitive on the issue."

OCTOBER 10, 1986
Letter to the president of the
Columbia Law School Alumni Association of Washington, D.C.

Since the 1970s, Ginsburg had advocated for women's full membership in civic, professional, and business associations that had welcomed only male members. She not only protested when the American Law Institute and Columbia University held events at the all-male Century Association in New York City, but she also fought to change the association's discriminatory policy.

In a detailed 1979 memorandum, she wrote, "If women are not offered equal access, if they are not welcomed as full members of the club, they are kept away from a traditional avenue for self-development, economic and political opportunity and advancement."

After receiving Ginsburg's pointed letter objecting to a planned luncheon at the men-only Cosmos Club, the Law School's director of development responded that "as soon as we heard the news about the Cosmos Club a fast switch was arranged."

■ ————— ■

“I believe we are the first
mother-daughter law school
teaching team.”

■ ————— ■

1994

Columbia Law School Reunion Questionnaire

As an engaged member of the Law School's alumni community, Ginsburg has attended reunions and faithfully contributed "Class Notes." In a 1999 questionnaire, she wrote that her most memorable Law School moment was her own graduation: "Now Columbia Law Professor Jane C. Ginsburg, then age four, called out from a Kent Library balcony seat as I received my diploma, 'That's my Mommy!'" [This photo from the Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States shows an exuberant Jane, with her mom and dad, the summer after her father's graduation.] In 1994, Ginsburg proudly reported that Jane had been named the Morton L. Janklow Professor of Literary and Artistic Property Law.

Teaching at Columbia was a family affair: Jane's father and Ginsburg's husband, Marty, was a professor at the Law School from 1978 to 1980.





"I owe it all to my secretary at Columbia Law School, who said, 'I'm typing all these briefs and articles for you and the word *sex, sex, sex* is on every page. Don't you know that those nine men [on the Supreme Court], when they hear that word, their first association is not what you want them to be thinking about? Why don't you use the word *gender*?'"

NOVEMBER 19, 1993
Columbia Law Women's Association discussion on landmark sex-discrimination cases

Ginsburg has always credited her "astute secretary" Milicent Tryon for suggesting she replace the word sex with the word gender in discussions of discrimination and civil rights. Tryon's reasoning was straightforward and sound: "It is a grammatical term, and it will ward off distracting associations." Little did they know at the time that a one-word substitution would forever change the language of the law.

“It was exciting to have you
at Columbia. You were a role model,
a consciousness raiser,
an inspiration to students and staff.
You made some people here think
differently about themselves and you
paid the price: one after another,
your secretaries quit to go
to law school.”

MARCH 15, 1983

Letter from Rosalind Rosenthal, assistant dean of faculty

Rosenthal, who started her career at Columbia Law School as a secretary, went on to become an associate dean. “When I think of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I should come up with something worthy of her impact on American society,” she recalled. “Instead I see her sudden, lovely smile as she dips into my candy jar to fortify herself for the next eight hours of work.”

March 15, 1983

The Hon. Ruth Bader Ginsburg
United States Court of Appeals
District of Columbia Circuit
United States Court House
Washington, D. C. 20001

Dear Ruth:

When I think of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I should come up with something worthy of her impact on American society. Instead I see her sudden, lovely smile as she dips into my candy jar to fortify herself for the next eight hours of work.,

It was exciting to have you at Columbia. You were a role model; a consciousness raiser, an inspiration to students and staff. You made some people here think differently about themselves and you paid the price: one after another, your secretaries quit to go to law school.

Happy birthday, with many, many more to come.

Fondly(?),

RR
Assistant Dean

*****THIS SHOULD NOT GO TO JUDGE GINSBURG!!! It goes to:

Albert Cacoza, Esq.
c/o Chambers of Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg
United States Court of Appeals
Washington, D. C. 20001



“Every single word she uttered was brilliant and precisely to the point. She was operating on an intellectual plane that was just far above all of us, but it also made us want to aspire to whatever excellence we had in our capacity to achieve.”

NOVEMBER 19, 1993

Remarks by Lynn Hecht Schafran, Class of 1974, at a discussion hosted by the Columbia Law Women’s Association in honor of Justice Ginsburg’s appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court

Schafran was a student in Ginsburg’s Sex Discrimination Law seminar and worked with her on a number of cases on behalf of the ACLU Women’s Rights Project. Soon after she graduated and while working at a large New York City firm, Schafran received a call from Ginsburg asking her to work on a Supreme Court case involving sex discrimination in high schools, an issue they had worked on together while at Columbia Law. “I really thought I had died and gone to heaven because what could be more of a compliment than to be invited to work on a case by Justice Ginsburg? I was speechless with gratitude.” With Ginsburg as her mentor and friend, Schafran went on to become a leading expert on gender equality and was an original member of the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession. She currently serves as director of the National Judicial Education Program at Legal Momentum.

"I tender my resignation from my
Columbia post effective at the close
of the business day, June 30, 1980.
It has been a special privilege to
hold a tenured position at Columbia."

JUNE 25, 1980

Letter to Columbia University President Michael I. Sovern, Class of 1955

Ginsburg was appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in June 1980. In her resignation letter, she noted that she would "enter on duty July 1, 1980."

Apparently, she had no intention of taking a day off between leaving the academy on a Monday afternoon and officially assuming her new judicial duties the next day.

Columbia University in the City of New York | New York, N. Y. 10027

SCHOOL OF LAW

435 West 116th Street

June 25, 1980

Michael I. Sovern, President
Columbia University
Office of the President
202 Low Library

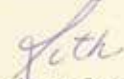
Dear Mike:

On June 18, 1980 I was appointed United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, and will enter on duty July 1, 1980. Accordingly, I tender my resignation from my Columbia post effective at the close of the business day, June 30, 1980.

It has been a special privilege to hold a tenured position at Columbia.

With best wishes for the continuing excellence of this great University.

Sincerely,


Ruth Bader Ginsburg

RBG:et

cc: Dean Albert J. Rosenthal

The Columbia Law community is forever indebted to Justice Ginsburg for the myriad ways she has shaped and strengthened the school for more than half a century. She has inspired generations of women and men to challenge the status quo and strive for excellence.

Even after joining the federal judiciary, Justice Ginsburg has unfailingly continued to enrich the life of the Law School as an engaged alumna, a former faculty member, and a mentor to dozens of Columbia Law graduates who have served as law clerks in her chambers and then gone on to become leaders in the legal profession.

As a justice on our nation's highest court for 25 years, Justice Ginsburg has epitomized the core values of Columbia Law School and embodies the ideals of American democracy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Columbia Law School wishes to thank the Supreme Court's Public Information Office for its assistance with this publication. We also extend a special thanks to the Columbia University Archives.

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