

## REMEMBERING DEBORAH RHODE

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In early 1969, my debate partner, Elliot Mincberg, and I debated against the New Trier East team of Deborah Rhode and Chip Black. I don't remember much about the debate except that we lost. Rhode and Black were the top team in the Chicago-area that year.

They qualified to go to the national high school debate tournament held by the National Forensic League. Before they did so, Elliot and I went with our coach, Earl Bell, to practice against Rhode and Black. We went on a Saturday morning to New Trier East and did two practice debates. Again, I remember very little other than that they were terrific debaters. After the debates, we were invited to Deborah's house for lunch. What I remember most was being in Chicago's suburbs for the first time and how different it all looked from my neighborhood on the far south side of Chicago. I also vividly remember Deborah's graciousness in hosting us.

After that day, I did not see Deborah for over a decade. She was a junior and I was a sophomore the year we debated against each other, but she did not participate in debate her senior year of high school. We were both college debaters, but participated in very different types of debate that did not overlap.

We became law professors around the same time, Deborah in 1979 and me in 1980. In the early 1980s, we renewed our acquaintance through involvement with the AALS section on professional responsibility. This was a major field for her from the outset of her teaching career and I began teaching it at University of Southern California Law School in 1983. She and Lewis Kaplow (another very successful former Chicago area high school debater) generously shared their materials with me as I began teaching the course. Deborah and I enjoyed renewing our contact and sharing information about the many people we knew in common.

Deborah's and my paths crossed fairly often over the last 40 years. From the beginning, there was always a warm connection from our having

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met as high school debaters. I, like everyone in the legal academy, enormously admired her accomplishments in several fields: feminist jurisprudence, professional responsibility, and leadership.

My last contact with her was on Wednesday, January 6, just two days before she died. I was tremendously honored to have been chosen to receive the Debora L. Rhode Award from the AALS Pro Bono and Public Service Opportunity Section. I wrote to her to express how special it was to me to receive an award named for her. We exchanged warm emails and remarked on how we had known each other for over a half century.

At the ceremony on Wednesday morning where I received the award, I began my remarks by saying:

“I want to thank the AALS Pro Bono and Public Services Opportunity Section for this amazing honor. It is hard for me to express how much it means to me. To begin with, it is very special that it is the Deborah L. Rhode Award. Deborah and I first met as competitor high school debaters in the Chicago-area over 50 years ago. I admire her tremendously and especially all she has done to advance the legal profession and leadership in law schools and in the profession. She is truly a role model for all of us.

The award also is so special because it is about public service and pro bono work. I went to law school because I wanted to be a civil rights lawyer. I believed that law is the most powerful tool for social change.”

Two days later, Deborah died. What an enormous loss to her family, to Stanford Law School, to the legal academy, and to our profession. She focused a great deal of her efforts on leadership, and she was a leader in so many ways.

In the field of professional responsibility, she is the most frequently cited scholar. Her casebook is widely used. Her book, *In the Interests of Justice: Reforming the Legal Profession*, published in 2010, is one of the best examinations of the legal profession that I have read. It stresses the need for much greater public accountability for the profession and why it needs to be reformed to better pursue justice.

Deborah also was a prolific author in writing about gender justice. Many of her articles and books were on this topic including *Justice and Gender: Sex Discrimination and the Law*, *Speaking of Sex: The Denial of Gender Inequality*, and *The Beauty Bias: The Injustice of Appearance in*

*Life and Law*. As with all of her scholarship, these books were original in their approach, thorough in their analysis, and beautifully written.

Deborah also focused on another field, and it was one where we again connected: leadership. Deborah realized that our students are going to be future leaders, but law schools do little to provide leadership training. Her book *Lawyers as Leaders* should be required reading for all law school deans, if not all law professors. She founded the AALS section on leadership and played a crucial role in guiding it. A few years ago, she convened a terrific symposium on leadership at Stanford Law School and I was honored to participate and for our paths to cross again.

Deborah was a leader in so many ways, modeling the behavior she urged us to teach. She held leadership positions in many organizations, such as serving as President of AALS. As a leader, she knew the importance of both articulating a vision and governing in an inclusive way that let everyone feel valued. I long have felt we teach best by how we act and Deborah personified what we all should aspire to in leadership roles. I hope that her efforts will cause more law schools to offer leadership training to our students.

It is impossible still for me to comprehend that so suddenly she is gone. I know, though, that she will live on through all of the students she taught in over 40 years at Stanford and through her writings that will be very influential for years to come. I know, too, that she will live on through all of the lives she touched. She was a person of both incredible intelligence and incredible decency and kindness. May her memory truly be a blessing to all who knew her and to all who will be influenced by her words in the months and years ahead.