A COMPILATION IN COMMEMORATION OF
CELEBRATION 50

The following section of the twenty-seventh volume of the *Harvard Women’s Law Journal* is a compilation of essays, articles, and speeches written in conjunction with Celebration 50, Harvard Law School’s commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the graduation of its first female students. Held the first weekend of May 2003, Celebration 50 was an opportunity for the Law School’s alumnae to acknowledge their gains and accomplishments from the past fifty years and to establish a sense of community among past and present female students. It featured speakers and panels on more than a dozen topics of interest to women lawyers, many of which are represented in the diverse pieces of this compilation.

Professor Elizabeth Bartholet and Youth Advocacy Center Director Betsy Krebs have authored articles on specific issues in family law, the topic of their Celebration 50 panel. Professor Margaret Stock’s essay on becoming an immigration attorney originated from the panel on which she sat, entitled Women and the Huddled Masses: Immigration Law. This compilation also highlights substantive legal issues that are of particular interest to women, such as the constitutional debate over same-sex marriage discussed in former ACLU Women’s Rights Project Director Brenda Feigen’s timely article.

Celebration 50’s distinctive category of programming devoted to the remarkable breadth of female Harvard lawyers’ career paths offered speeches by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, and CEO of CNBC Pamela Thomas-Graham, and led to articles authored by Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey, former Skidmore College President Jamienne Studley, and *Pinstripes & Pearls* author Judith Richards Hope. These six pieces offer both examples of, and insights into, the inspiring capabilities of female lawyers.

Much of what occurred during Celebration 50, as reflected in several of the following pieces, was positive and optimistic. Speakers recalled their experiences at Harvard Law School fondly and celebrated progress made at the Law School since their graduation. For example, in accepting the Celebration 50 award, California State Senator Sheila Kuehl recalled arriving at Harvard Law School “hungry for justice, a fledgling feminist, and fascinated.” She asserted, “What I found was profound: intellectual freedom, challenge, a political spectrum, and a kind of casual acceptance of the fact that we were all pretty damned smart.”1 In her speech, Pamela Thomas-Graham declares that “it was not until I entered law school that I

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1 Sheila Kuehl, Address at Celebration 50, Harvard Law School (May 2, 2003).
learned how not to keep my head down. In fact, I learned to be bold, imaginative, and to question authority. I learned that it is okay—actually very important—to be aggressive in the pursuit of your objectives.”2 These women’s experiences underscore that the training and credentials provided by Harvard Law School shaped and continue to shape the career opportunities of many alumnae.

It is not difficult to see the progress Harvard Law School has made regarding women in these fifty years. While Judith Richards Hope laments that the “women in [her] class had few, if any, female role models,”3 the class of 2004 is the first to graduate under a female dean.4 However, it is too readily apparent that Harvard Law School has yet to become sufficiently receptive to the needs of its female students. In her address Justice Ginsburg remarks that “Harvard has a long history, an attendant security in its traditions, and at least until recent times, no little resistance to change.”5 The very title “Celebration 50” is a reminder of Harvard Law School’s aversion to progressive change: Yale Law School, Stanford Law School, and Columbia Law School (which admitted women in 1886, 1908, and 1927, respectively) have long since passed their 75th or even 100th comparable anniversaries.

Many current and recent Law School students contend that the historic reluctance to adopt creative and cutting-edge measures to confront issues of diversity, as suggested by Ginsburg, still encumbers the law school.6 Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman, who graduated in 1965, remarked at Celebration 50 that she and her female classmates were treated as “second-class citizens” and agreed with the assertion of ACLU President Nadine Strossen, class of 1975, that women were typically ignored by faculty, causing a degree of frustration and resentment that affected their studies.7 Nearly thirty years later, Harvard Law School women find themselves in a similar position: a 2003 study demonstrates that women are significantly less likely than men to participate during class, graduate with honors, or positively view their own legal abilities.8

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6 For example, while the average law school student body is 48.7% female, Harvard Law School is only 44% female. Since 1988, “the percentage of female students in the class has flatlined . . . . [demonstrating that] Harvard Law School has not made any significant steps in the last eight years toward increasing diversity.” Adina Levine, Faculty Responds to Study on Gender Disparity at HLS, Harv. L. Rec., Feb. 26, 2004, at 1.
8 Adam Neufeld et al., Working Group on Student Experiences, Study on Women’s
Harvard Law School has yet to act as a forerunner in taking innovative steps toward gender equality and to recognize this failure’s impact on the legal community’s treatment of women. The severe underrepresentation of women among members of the *Harvard Law Review*, the disturbing implications of the gender divide confirmed in the previously mentioned study at the Law School, and the continuing dearth of female tenured professors offer Harvard Law School opportunities to act according to its responsibility to provide both women and men with equally effective legal educations. The Law School’s reluctance to adopt resolute and proactive measures to combat these entrenched problems highlights the unfortunate fact that female students are still forced to “challenge the expectations, values, institutions, and habits that flow[] from the male model” of the lawyer in order to achieve progress.

Sheila Kuehl, co-founder of the *Harvard Women’s Law Journal*, remarked at Celebration 50 that the “law is not fixed and unyielding. It lives and breathes and responds.” Harvard Law School must strive to become a similarly responsive institution; only then can we envision that at Celebration 75 we will have even more to celebrate and less to lament.

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9 In a gender gap that has continued to increase in recent years, although women make up approximately 44% of the student body, they constituted only 24.7% of *Harvard Law Review* editors in 2003. Tammy Petinnato & Hugo Torres, *Women and Law Review: An Historical Overview*, Harv. L. Rec., Oct. 9, 2003, at 4.

10 Neufeld et al., supra note 8.

11 A mere 18.5% of all tenured or tenure-track Harvard Law School professors are women. Data on file with the Harvard Law School Office of Academic Affairs.


13 Kuehl, supra note 1.