



## An Interview with Kathy Greenberg

*Kathy Greenberg graduated from Cardozo in 1982 and was elected chair of the Law School's Board in the spring of 2004, becoming the first Cardozo graduate and the first woman to take on the job. A couple of months after the election, Cardozo Life editor Susan Davis sat down with Ms. Greenberg to find out what goals she was setting for herself and her alma mater.*

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more involved with the Law School.  
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**DAVIS:** Are you from New York originally?

**GREENBERG:** No. I'm from Minnesota. I went to graduate school in Los Angeles. Then I moved to New York and worked on Wall Street for a hedge fund. Eleven years after I graduated from college, I went to law school.

**DAVIS:** Why did you decide to go to law school?

**GREENBERG:** I came from a family of lawyers. My dad was the chief enforcement attorney for petroleum rationing at the Office of Price Administration in Washington during World War II.

**DAVIS:** Can you tell us about your time in law school?

**GREENBERG:** I've always thought that Cardozo was the intellectual jewel in this city, that it offered then and now a very demanding education. But law school was for me more than just an intellectual challenge. It was going back to school as an older student, and a woman. When I graduated from college in 1968, I think law schools had around 6 percent women, and by 1979 when I started at Cardozo, 31 percent were women, although Cardozo's student body was about 50 percent.

After law school I took a job at Shea & Gould, and while I was there I went to NYU for the tax LL.M. program, and frankly NYU was not nearly as demanding as Cardozo.

**DAVIS:** You then returned to Cardozo?

**GREENBERG:** I graduated in 1982 and I came back in '88 to work at the Bet Tzedek Clinic with Toby Golick for about two years.

**DAVIS:** Had you participated in Bet Tzedek as a student?

**GREENBERG:** No. When I was a student, the only clinic at Cardozo was the Criminal Law Clinic with Barry Scheck.

**DAVIS:** What kind of cases were you working on at Bet Tzedek when you returned?

**GREENBERG:** I was a trust and estates lawyer at Shea & Gould, so I worked on wills and taught students how to draft them.

**DAVIS:** Was Bet Tzedek critical in your decision to start New York Legal Assistance Group?

**GREENBERG:** I realized while working at Bet Tzedek that the students were actually able to go out and make home visits to their clients. However, the amount they could accomplish was limited by the academic year. The need was so overwhelming. I wanted to start a privately funded pro bono law firm, which would be restricted as to the clients we could serve only by malpractice insurance. By not receiving government funding, it could offer services like making home visits and take a broader range of clients who did not qualify for legal aid due to income restrictions.

**DAVIS:** When did you found NYLAG?

**GREENBERG:** Well, I started thinking about it in 1988, but it took a long time to raise the money. It was extremely important to me that I do this on my own, and I did. I went to the United Jewish Appeal and they gave me \$25,000 as seed money. Then I needed someone to run it. So in late '89 I asked Yisroel Schulman, who was working at Bet Tzedek, if he would consider becoming executive director. He was a very young lawyer. I think he'd been out of law school for a year, and he jumped at the chance. [*Editor's note:* Yisroel Schulman graduated from Cardozo in 1987.]

Today, there are 28 full-time paid attorneys and more than 200 volunteer lawyers, law students, and others. It's flourishing. At the beginning, people asked, "How will you get clients?" And I answered, "If you don't charge, it's amazing, they find you!"

We had our first office on 42nd Street in the Lincoln Building because there was a law library in the basement and we didn't have any books. It was the early '90s, when a lot of law firms were going out of business as a result of a recession. Periodically, we would get a call from the Lincoln Building management telling us to go to one office or another and help ourselves to the furniture. That's how we furnished our office. It worked out really well. In 1995 we moved into the UJA Federation building



at 130 E. 59th Street, and this year we moved to 450 W. 33rd Street.

**DAVIS:** Are your clients primarily the elderly?

**GREENBERG:** I started the organization for the elderly and disabled. Since we were able to have a broader range of clients, we were able to serve anyone entitled to a benefit: Medicaid, Medicare, home care, Social Security Insurance. We started bringing some class actions in certain areas. Then, I can't remember which year it was, the government cut funding to any legal aid or legal services organization that brought class actions. That's when class action lawsuits became the centerpiece of the organization.

**DAVIS:** Is that how the organization supports itself?

**GREENBERG:** No, NYLAG is all privately funded by foundations, law firms, and individuals.

**DAVIS:** Are you still involved with the organization?

**GREENBERG:** I now serve as honorary chairman, having been board chair.

I felt that it was really important to move on and have other people run the organization. I didn't want it to be so inextricably wound up with me, and I wanted to be sure it had a life of its own. Now it has a superb board and chairman, and it's doing extremely well. It has grown to encompass many areas including family law and the issue of domestic violence, immigration, legal health, and others.

**DAVIS:** You've got to be very proud.

**GREENBERG:** I'm very, very happy with my decision to start NYLAG.

**DAVIS:** Do you work at all anymore as an attorney?

**GREENBERG:** No. I've taken on a full-time job now as chair of the Cardozo Board.

**DAVIS:** How did you become reinvolved with Cardozo?

**GREENBERG:** In this last particular go-around, it was after David Rudenstine became dean. He was my Con Law professor. I have the highest regard for him. Cardozo has had really superb deans all along, but I loved that David had been at the School almost from the beginning and really understood the whole culture and had a great rapport with the students.

**DAVIS:** You're the first chair who's been a graduate of Cardozo. Do you think that provides you with a different kind of vision or different strengths?

**GREENBERG:** I don't know if it's a strength, but one of my major goals is to get the alumni more involved with the

Law School. I really believe that's where the future of the School lies. We have more than 8,000 alumni, and many, especially from the earlier years, got lost along the way. We have a lot of very distinguished alums, many of whom would probably like to know about the School and how well it's doing.

**DAVIS:** Do you have some ideas about how you're going to do that?

**GREENBERG:** Well, I recently had a cocktail party and about 15 alumni came. So I quickly calculated and realized that at that rate I have to have another 533 to bring everyone together! But it's exciting to find out where people are in their lives, what they're doing, and how

raised about \$40,000, which is extremely admirable. However, I think NYU makes about \$300,000 at their auction, so I'd like to make that our goal.

**DAVIS:** Are there other specific goals you set for yourself?

**GREENBERG:** Just to work with the Board and develop a greater culture of giving.

**DAVIS:** It seems to me that you've come to your new job at a rather auspicious time. We have a new dean who's got lots of energy, and there also is a new president at Yeshiva University who seems eager to forge a new relationship with the Law School. Recently he set forth a challenge to our alumni, offering a dollar-for-dollar chal-

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successful they are. Most people who go to professional school or to a college are interested in doing well. If we re-engage our graduates, I think it will be really good for the School and for them, too.

**DAVIS:** I know that after you were elected chair you went through a process to educate yourself by meeting faculty, administrators, students, and others to learn what was going on. Were there any surprises along the way or things about the School that you learned that were particularly impressive?

**GREENBERG:** I don't think the alumni community knows just how well the School is doing in terms of the quality of students—their LSAT scores and academic records, and the schools that we're competing with today. I would say that we probably have one of the finest admissions deans in the country. I met with students who said they just couldn't get over that Rob Schwartz called them personally to let them know when they were admitted and stayed involved with them over their time at Cardozo. I'm very enthused about the new career services dean, Arthur Fama, because I really think that he's committed to going to as many law firms as possible to get more students into the firms that interest them. This year, I found out very late about the student auction for public interest stipends, which is very dear to my heart. I hope that this year I can work with the student organizers and have the Board work with them. Last year, the students

challenge up to \$1 million. Can you talk a little about this challenge and the importance of the annual fund?

**GREENBERG:** I think that a lot of our alumni feel that Yeshiva had too much of a financial strangle hold on the Law School. The fact that Richard Joel was once a dean at Cardozo makes him very committed to the Law School, as seen in his offering this challenge. One of my goals is to have the alums meet that goal. As David has said, if 1,000 people each gave \$1,000, we would meet it, although any size gift is really welcome. I believe that if you make a financial contribution to an organization, you have more of a commitment to it, and where better to contribute than the Law School from where you graduated?

**DAVIS:** Projecting into the future, let's say five years, what would you like to have accomplished as chair?

**GREENBERG:** I'd like to see David really satisfied with what we've done, because he deserves it. He's put his heart and soul into Cardozo. He's really a scholar who decided to take this challenge on for a school he loves. He has many goals. In terms of the facility, we've done some remarkable work in the lobby, in the moot court room, and in the library, but there's a lot left to do. He wants to bring in more faculty, start new programs, and increase scholarships. There are many challenges and I want to help him accomplish his goals. ■