

# Howard Lesnick, Law

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*Howard Lesnick*

Howard Lesnick, Jefferson B. Fordham Professor of Law Emeritus who built the foundation for the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School's nationally recognized public service program and was part of Penn Law for 50 years, died April 19 after a brief illness. He was 88.

Mr. Lesnick was born in New York City and raised in the Bronx and Bangor, Pennsylvania. He graduated from New York University with a BA in history in 1952. He went on to earn a master's in American history in 1953 and a law degree in 1958 from Columbia University. He also served in the US Army, 1953-1955.

After law school, he practiced law and clerked for US Supreme Court Justice J.M. Harlan before joining the Penn Law faculty in 1960 as an assistant professor. He became a full professor in 1965. Mr. Lesnick helped establish Penn Law's original Center on Professionalism, which became a national model for similar programs all over the country, and he served as a participating faculty member 1982-1996. During that time, 1982-1988, he left his full-time position at Penn to become a distinguished professor of law and the founding academic dean at City University of New York Law School. At CUNY, he created new a model of legal education predicated on the service of human needs through law. During this time he also held positions as a member, on the staff, and on the board of directors for the Center for Law and Human Values.

Mr. Lesnick returned to Penn full time in 1988 to become the Jefferson B. Fordham Professor of Law. He remained in this position until his retirement in 2016, earning emeritus status at that time. As supervising director of Penn Law's clinic, he expanded its work to encompass the emerging field of prisoners' rights.

Mr. Lesnick was a rigorous scholar, publishing on labor law and other subjects. He published five books on moral education, professional responsibility and religious consciousness in the law. But it was his intense advocacy of public service, and the subsequent creation of a mandatory pro bono program (aka the Public Service Program) at Penn Law, for which he is most remembered. He insisted that pro bono work was central to the practice of law. Because of his efforts, law schools now commonly require students to perform pro bono work before graduation. Penn Law established the annual Howard Lesnick Pro Bono Award, presented to an alumnus who has demonstrated a sustained commitment to pro bono or public service work throughout a career in the private sector.

Mr. Lesnick also served as the founding director of the Reginald Heber Smith Community Lawyer Fellowship program, which trained the first generation of American legal services attorneys. In 1972, he helped found the Society of American Law Teachers. In 1975, he designed a curriculum for the Bryn Mawr School of Social Work training social service professionals to work with legal systems. Beginning in 1978, he served as an Impartial Umpire under the AFL-CIO Internal Disputes Plan. He also served as a member of the board of directors of the Center for Law and Human Values and Philadelphia Community Legal Services, on the advisory board for the *Journal of Law and Religion*, and as visiting fellow at the Center for Law and Social Policy. Among other awards, Mr. Lesnick received a Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Fellowship, the Society of American Law Teachers Distinguished Service Award, the Community Legal Services Equal Justice Award, the American Association of Law Schools Deborah Rhode Award for contributions to public service, and the University of Pennsylvania Law School Beacon Award.

"Howard never forgot the true meaning of legal practice," said Ted Ruger, Dean and Bernard G. Segal Professor of Law. "He intuitively understood that lawyers had a professional responsibility to help the less fortunate gain access to justice and made a point of instilling those values into the culture of the Law School."

Dean Ruger continued, "He had an immeasurable impact on Penn Law. Hundreds and hundreds of students are working in the public interest due to his influence. He brought glory to our institution and everyone who knew him was better for it."

Mr. Lesnick is survived by his wife, Carolyn Schodt; his children, Alice (Robert Goldberg), Caleb Schodt (Carolyn Ingram) and Abigail (Jonathan Marvinny); brothers, Irving (Sheila) and Alan (Molly); and grandchildren, Lillian Goldberg, Lowell Nottage, June Goldberg and Dylan Schodt.

Penn Law will remember and memorialize Mr. Lesnick in a variety of ways, including with an in-person memorial service in the future; information to come.