

CENTER FOR JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

DORIS L. SASSOWER, Director and Co-Founder of the Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc., is a *cum laude* graduate of New York University Law School. One of five women in her graduating class, she was a Florence Allen Scholar (named for the first woman to serve as Chief Judge of a federal appeals court). Following her admission to the bar in 1955, she launched her legal career as an assistant to one of the foremost champions of court reform of his day -- Arthur T. Vanderbilt, then Chief Justice of the highest court of the State of New Jersey.

Thereafter, over a thirty-five year period, Ms. Sassower built a private law practice, while continuing her commitment to public service. Early on, she held positions of leadership. From 1963 to 1965, she served as the first woman and youngest President of the Lawyers' Group of the Alumni Association of Brooklyn College, from which she graduated *summa cum laude* in 1954. In 1968, she became the youngest President of the New York Women's Bar Association, serving from 1968-69. As a leader of the women's rights movement, long before there was a recognized "movement", she broke ground with her seminal article, "*What's Wrong With Women Lawyers?*" published in 1968 in Trial Magazine, a first on the subject of discrimination against women in a major professional journal. She actively promoted the importance of increasing the number of women in the legal profession and on the bench, a subject on which she spoke before the National Conference of the Bar Presidents in 1969 -- the first woman ever to address that body.

A recipient of countless honors and awards, Ms. Sassower was named Outstanding Young Woman of America from the State of New York in 1969 and, in 1970, became President of Phi Beta Kappa Alumnae in New York. In 1971, she represented the New York Women's Bar Association on the first judicial screening panel set up in New York County to review the qualifications of candidates for the Supreme Court in the First Judicial Department. Her article on the subject was published on the front page of the New York Law Journal in October 1971. Thereafter, she became the first woman member of the New York Bar Association's Judiciary Committee. In that capacity, she served for eight years -- spending innumerable hours, *pro bono*, interviewing candidates for the New York State Court of Appeals, the Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court, and the State Court of Claims.

In 1972, at age 39, Ms. Sassower was nominated as a candidate for the New York Court of Appeals -- the first woman practitioner to be accorded such distinction. In 1973, the American Bar Association named her as its first woman Chair of the National Conference of Lawyers and Social Workers. In 1981, the National Organization for Women gave her a Special Award "for her outstanding achievements on behalf of women and children in the area of Family Law" and for her intensive divorce reform work. At the same time, her trail-blazing work on behalf of fathers earned her a national reputation as "the mother of joint custody".

Ex "I-2"

A Fellow of the Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, Ms. Sassower was elected in 1989 to the Fellows of the American Bar Foundation, "an honor reserved for *less than one-third of one percent* of the practicing bar in each State", awarded "to lawyers whose professional, public and private careers have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the welfare of their communities and to the objectives of the American Bar Association..."

In 1990, as *pro bono* counsel to the Ninth Judicial Committee, she brought the historic lawsuit of *Castracan v. Colavita*, under New York's Election Law, to challenge the manipulation of state court judgeships by political party bosses and the misconduct of their judicial nominees. The lower courts dumped the case. On June 14, 1991, five days after The New York Times printed her Letter to the Editor about the case and her intention to appeal it to the Court of Appeals, she was suspended from the practice of law, immediately, indefinitely, unconditionally -- without any charges, hearing, findings, or reasons. Her continued and repeated attempts to obtain a hearing as to the basis for the retaliatory and lawless suspension of her license and to obtain appellate review have all been denied. This is partially reflected by the Op-Ed ad, "*Where Do You Go When Judges Break the law?*", published in The New York Times on October 26, 1994.

This has not silenced her from speaking forcefully for reform of the processes of judicial selection and discipline. She has since devoted her energies to building CJA, serving as its Director since its inception.