

CENTER *for* JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC.

(914) 421-1200 • Fax (914) 684-6554

E-Mail: probono@delphi.com

Box 69, Gedney Station

White Plains, New York 10605

By Fax and Mail: 212-556-3717
10 pages

August 27, 1996

Ms. Joyce Purnick
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036-3959

Dear Ms. Purnick:

Following up our telephone conversation earlier today, this is to reiterate our complete willingness to meet with you, Jan Hoffman, or anyone else at The New York Times so that you can learn more about the Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc.

We would be pleased to come to the Times' 43rd Street building-- or to invite you to CJA's headquarters. As discussed, the film crew that taped us for the A & E Investigative Reports documentary, which aired last April, came to our headquarters¹. Likewise, the Senior Editor of the Reader's Digest Washington Bureau, whose story about "worst judges" appears in this month's issue, came to our headquarters².

We have no doubt but that you will be mightily impressed by the important work CJA is doing to protect the public from dysfunctional and corrupted behind-closed-door processes of judicial selection and discipline. You will find in us an inspiring example of citizen action at its very best.

No, we are not the City Bar or the American Bar Association. But we are courageously doing what those organizations and our so-called "leaders" cowardly and for reasons of their own self-interest refuse to do: address empirical evidence that mechanisms which, on paper, safeguard the public from incompetent, abusive, and dishonest judges, are not doing so in fact.

¹ We have a video copy of the A & E show. Let us know if you wish to see it.

² I enclose a copy of the page in which I am quoted in the Reader's Digest. The statistics regarding disposition of judicial misconduct complaints in New York State and in the federal system were provided by me--statistics taken from official publications.

Moreover, as you know from CJA's defense of Judge Duckman--at a time when no one was uttering a peep in his defense and, indeed, before your own interview with Judge Duckman was published--CJA does not shrink from challenging political leaders head on when they misrepresent to the public the issue of judicial misconduct.

As should have been obvious from the past correspondence that the Times has received from us over the past many years, everything CJA does is meticulously documented, empirically-based, and readily verifiable. We invite you to see that for yourself--much as we have always extended such invitations in the past.

As to CJA's membership, this letter is the written confirmation you requested that it is several hundred strong in 22 states, as far away as Alaska.

As to my mother's credentials, I enclose her 1989 Martindale-Hubbell law listing. I believe it was among the materials I provided you in November 1994--when we first met at the City Bar's symposium on "How to Become a Judge". Indeed, I believe it was you who introduced yourself to me on that occasion after I publicly addressed a question about the constitutionality of judicial cross-endorsements to Chief Judge Judith Kaye. In any event, the Martindale-Hubbell law listing is on the reverse side of the reprint of our \$17,000 Times' ad, "Where Do You Go When Judges Break the Law?". That reprint, an insert to CJA's brochure, was provided both to you and Ms. Hoffman on numerous occasions.

To further assist you in "sizing up" my mother's credentials, I enclose her "CJA Director's Biography", as well as a copy of the article she wrote on judicial selection, published on the front-page of the New York Law Journal on October 22, 1971.

The last lines of that article are as true today as when they were written:

"Perhaps the day when the judiciary is wholly divorced from political influence can be seen only in the eyes of visionaries. But unrelenting public interest and the glare of publicity focused on every judicial vacancy can make that day come sooner."

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I would hope that by October 22nd of this year--the 25th anniversary of that Law Journal article--the Times will see fit to print the breathtaking story about how CJA, built on my mother's unstinting commitment and sacrifice, is making that visionary future happen.

Please let us hear from you soon as to when we can sit down together on this timely, albeit long overdue, story.

Thank you.

Yours for a quality judiciary,

Elena

ELENA RUTH SASSOWER, Coordinator
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc.

P.S. We have recently updated CJA's brochure to reflect its continuing achievements and development--now a §501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. A copy is enclosed.

Enclosures: (a) Reader's Digest, August 1996, p. 39
(b) DLS' Martindale-Hubbell Law Listing
(c) CJA Director's Biography
(d) NYLJ, 10/22/71
(e) CJA brochure

cc: Jan Hoffman (by mail)

neantime, the DOC can-
personal property without
ng Giddings's permission.
k months of hearings and
s with prisoners before the
was allowed to confiscate
hangers, ceramic mugs
ed plastic cups, items that
sed as weapons or as con-
illegal drugs. The depart-
o provide prisoners with
s—at a cost to taxpayers
000.

s also ordered that pris-
estified in the case should
ness fees. This prompted
Engler to label Giddings
' The policy was wiped
state legislature in 1994.
mous eight-year case has
ers more than \$500,000
sport of prisoners to the
troom as well as for legal
aff time. Giddings even
soners to get their own
o handle media inquiries.
ted the sister of one of
s, the multiple rapist.
parate case, Giddings
er \$67,000 to an inmate
fire to his cell and then
DOC for his injuries—
ere should be a smoke
every cell. As with a high
of his cases involving the
ngs's ruling here was over-
higher court.

David Ramirez

Denver, Colo.

last January, 14-year-old
ero watched as a friend

shot a 14-year-old girl in the head,
then helped drag her to a nearby
field where she was left to die. The
boy who pulled the trigger pleaded
guilty, and Romero was convicted
by a jury of being an accessory to
manslaughter. Prosecutors sought the
maximum sentence of two years in
a juvenile facility. They were stunned
when Juvenile Court Judge David
Ramirez gave Romero probation.

Ramirez handles 80 percent of Den-
ver's delinquency cases. Because of
his indulgent attitude and light sen-
tences, the 43-year-old judge is nick-
named Uncle Dave by delinquents.

In a series of articles, the *Rocky
Mountain News* chronicled other
Ramirez sentences. He placed on
probation a 16-year-old who was
convicted of sexually assaulting his
11-year-old stepsister. He assigned a
mere \$50 fine to an 18-year-old who,
when caught fleeing the scene of a
hit-and-run accident, had attacked
the police officer and motorist who
corralled him.

Last October, Steven John Roybal,
a 14-year-old wanted by the police,
allegedly attacked two Denver police
officers with a knife as they were
investigating a report of a prowler.
While Roybal waited in the county
jail to face attempted-murder charges
as an adult, Ramirez tried to transfer
him to a juvenile facility. The issue
was resolved only when the Colorado
Supreme Court ruled that Ramirez
had no jurisdiction over Roybal.

Joseph C'de Baca, a Denver mid-
dle-school teacher, hears his students
calling Ramirez's juvenile court a

joke and laughing about it being a
day off from school. Says C'de Baca:
"He's trying to be a
guardian angel to these
kids, but he's actually
making them worse
criminals."

Admits one 17-year-
old who was given pro-
bation repeatedly only
to go on to commit a
string of burglaries and car thefts
that finally landed him in jail: "Uncle
Dave didn't do me any favors."



ELENA SASSOWER of the Center for
Judicial Accountability, a judicial watch-
dog group, is among those who are
concerned for the system. "The selec-
tion process isn't choosing the best
judges, and the disciplinary process
isn't getting rid of the worst judges,"
she says. Indeed, a 1993 national com-
mission, for example, found that 95
percent of all complaints against fed-
eral judges are dismissed summarily
by other federal judges put in place
to review them. At the state level, New
York is supposed to have the nation's
top judicial oversight organization.
Over 85 percent of complaints are dis-
missed without investigation.

Reform is necessary; greater pub-
lic scrutiny of judicial appointments
and tightened judicial-review proce-
dures are long overdue. Notes former
U.S. Attorney General Dick Thorn-
burgh, "Without independent, profes-
sionally qualified and capable judges,
public confidence in the courts is
eroded, and the rule of law cannot
exist."

Reprints of this article are available. See page 200.

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".

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, of which she serves as Director.

Martindale-Hubbell
Law Directory

DORIS L. SASSOWER, P.C.

WESTCHESTER FINANCIAL CENTER

30 MAIN STREET

WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK 10606

Telephone: 914-682-2001

Other White Plains Office: 283 Soundview Avenue. Telephone:
914-997-1677.

*Matrimonial, Real Estate, Commercial, Corporate, Trusts and
Estates, Civil Rights.*

DORIS L. SASSOWER, born New York, N.Y., September 25, 1932; admitted to bar, 1955, New York; 1961, U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Claims Court, U.S. Court of Military Appeals and U.S. Court of International Trade. Education: Brooklyn College (B.A., summa cum laude, 1954); New York University (J.D., cum laude, 1955). Phi Beta Kappa. Florence Allen Scholar. Law Assistant: U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York, 1954-1955; Chief Justice Arthur T. Vanderbilt, Supreme Court of New Jersey, 1956-1957. President, Phi Beta Kappa Alumnae in New York, 1970-71. President, New York Women's Bar Association, 1968-69. President, Lawyers' Group of Brooklyn College Alumni Association, 1963-65. Recipient: Distinguished Woman Award, Northwood Institute, Midland, Michigan, 1976. Special Award "for outstanding achievements on behalf of women and children," National Organization for Women—NYS, 1981; New York Women's Sports Association Award "as champion of equal rights," 1981. Distinguished Alumna Award, Brooklyn College, 1973. Named Outstanding Young Woman of America, State of New York, 1969. Nominated as candidate for New York Court of Appeals, 1972. Columnist: ("Feminism and the Law") and Member, Editorial Board, Woman's Life Magazine, 1981. Author: Book Review, *Separation Agreements and Marital Contracts*, Trial Magazine, October, 1987; *Support Handbook*, ABA Journal, October, 1986; Anatomy of a Settlement Agreement Divorce Law Education Institute 1982 "Climax of a Custody Case," *Litigation*, Summer, 1982; "Finding a Divorce Lawyer you can Trust," *Scarsdale Inquirer*, May 20, 1982. "Is This Any Way To Run An Election?" *American Bar Association Journal*, August, 1980; "The Disposable Parent: The Case for Joint Custody," Trial Magazine, April, 1980. "Marriages in Turmoil: The Lawyer as Doctor," *Journal of Psychiatry and Law*, Fall, 1979. "Custody's Last Stand," Trial Magazine, September, 1979; "Sex Discrimination-How to Know It When You See It," *American Bar Association Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities Newsletter*, Summer, 1976; "Sex Discrimination and The Law," *NY Women's Week*, November 8, 1976; "Women, Power and the Law," *American Bar Association Journal*, May, 1976; "The Chief Justice Wore a Red Dress," *Woman In the Year 2000*, Arbor House, 1974; "Women and the Judiciary: Undoing the Law of the Creator," *Judicature*, February, 1974; "Prostitution Review," *Juris Doctor*, February, 1974; "No-Fault' Divorce and Women's Property Rights," *New York State Bar Journal*, November, 1973; "Marital Bliss: Till Divorce Do Us Part," *Juris Doctor*, April, 1973; "Women's Rights in Higher Education," *Current*, November, 1972; "Women and the Law: The Unfinished Revolution," *Human Rights*, Fall, 1972; "Matrimonial Law Reform: Equal Property Rights for Women," *New York State Bar Journal*, October, 1972; "Judicial Selection Panels: An Exercise in Futility?," *New York Law Journal*, October 22, 1971; "Women in the Law: The Second Hundred Years," *American Bar Association Journal*, April, 1971; "The Role of Lawyers in Women's Liberation," *New York Law Journal*, December 30, 1970; "The Legal Rights of Professional Women," *Contemporary Education*, February, 1972; "Women and the Legal Profession," *Student Lawyer Journal*, November, 1970; "Women in the Professions," *Women's Role in Contemporary Society*, 1972; "The Legal Profession and Women's Rights," *Rutgers Law Review*, Fall, 1970; "What's Wrong With Women Lawyers?," Trial Magazine, October-November, 1968. Address to: The National Conference of Bar Presidents, Congressional Record, Vol. 115, No. 24 E 815-6, February 5, 1969; The New York Womens Bar Association, Congressional Record, Vol. 114, No. E5267-8, June 11, 1968. Director: New York University Law Alumni Association, 1974; International Institute of Women Studies, 1971; Institute on Women's Wrongs, 1973; Executive Woman, 1973. Co-organizer, National Conference of Professional and Academic Women, 1970. Founder and Special Consultant, Professional Women's Caucus, 1970. Trustee, Supreme Court Library, White Plains, New York, by appointment of Governor Carey, 1977-1986 (Chair, 1982-1986). Elected Delegate, White House Conference on Small Business, 1986. Member, Panel of Arbitrators, American Arbitration Association. Member: The Association of Trial Lawyers of America; The Association of the Bar of the City of New York; Westchester County, New York State (Member: Judicial Selection Committee; Legislative Committee, Family Law Section), Federal and American (ABA Chair, National Conference of Lawyers and Social Workers, 1973-1974; Member, Sections on: Family Law; Individual Rights and Responsibilities Committee on Rights of Women, 1982; Litigation) Bar Associations; New York State Trial Lawyers Association; American Judicature Society; National Association of Women Lawyers (Official Observer to the U.N., 1969-1970); Consular Law Society; Roscoe Pound-American Trial Lawyers' Foundation; American Association for the International Commission of Jurists; Association of Feminist Consultants; Westchester Association of Women Business Owners; American Womens' Economic Development Corp.; Womens' Forum. Fellow: American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers; New York Bar Foundation.

"AV" rating
1989 edition