

Minnesota Journal of Law & Inequality

Volume 6 | Issue 1

Article 1

June 1988

Introduction

Robert A. Stein

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Recommended Citation

Robert A. Stein, *Introduction*, 6(1) LAW & INEQ. vii (1988),

Minnesota Journal of Law & Inequality is published by the
University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing.



Introduction

I was privileged to be present to hear a remarkable panel of presentations on July 17, 1987. The setting was the 1987 Annual Judicial Conference of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. The theme of the Conference was recognition of the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. The subject addressed by the panel was timely and important — the process of extension of constitutional protections to women.

The composition of the panel was an historic first. Never before had the Judicial Conference of the Eighth Circuit been addressed by a panel made up exclusively of women. And what an extraordinary panel! Seldom has such a distinguished group of judges, lawyers and professors been more qualified by intellect and experience to discuss their subject. A standing ovation by the more than 500 persons present followed the presentation of the papers.

The panel and subject was introduced by U.S. District Judge Diana Murphy, of the District of Minnesota, who also served with me as a member of the Conference program planning committee, chaired by Judge Myron H. Bright of the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. Judge Murphy deserves credit for conceiving and proposing this subject for the Conference program and for assembling the extraordinary panel of presenters. The first paper was presented by Professor Mary Beth Norton, who holds the Mary Donlon Alger Chair of American History at Cornell University. Professor Norton drew upon her extensive scholarly research to describe *The Constitutional Status of Women in 1787*. Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg, of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, traced the development of the extension of constitutional protections to women in her *Remarks on Women Becoming Part of the Constitution*. In her work as a distinguished law professor before her appointment to the Court of Appeals, Judge Ginsburg developed some of the intellectual foundations for the changes in the law relating to women.

Ms. Lynn Hecht Schafran, Director of the National Judicial Education Program to Promote Equality of Women and Men in the Courts, addressed important challenges that remain in her presentation, *Women in the Courts Today; How Much Has Changed*. And one of the great advocates and judges of our time,

Judge Constance Baker Motley, Senior U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York and former Chief Judge of that District, traced these developments in a dramatic and powerful way through reflections on her own career in *Some Recollections of My Career*. The program was brought to a strong conclusion by presentations by Justice Beryl Levine of the North Dakota Supreme Court and by Judge Murphy.

It was essential to record in a permanent publication the ideas presented in these papers. I believe these papers are a significant body of scholarship which will influence future constitutional development. I am very pleased that the entire group of papers is being published in this issue of *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice*. It is a monumental issue. Read on with interest and enjoyment.

Dean Robert A. Stein
University of Minnesota Law School