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## BC Law Grads are 2013 WBA Robinson Award Winners

Boston College Law School

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## BC Law Grads are 2013 WBA Robinson Award Winners

2013 NEWS ARCHIVE

07/02/13

Newton, MA--Boston College Law School is pleased to announce that both recipients of the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts (WBA) 2013 Lelia J. Robinson Award--Judith Olans Brown '65 and Susan M. Finegan '91--are graduates of BC Law.

"The WBA is thrilled to recognize two women whose work truly embodies the spirit of Lelia J. Robinson," said WBA President Lurleen Gannon in a recent press release. "Judith and Susan are relentless advocates, role models and pioneers who inspire women in the profession. The opportunity to work alongside them and count them as friends to the WBA is a privilege for our organization."

Named for the first woman admitted to the Massachusetts bar, the Lelia J. Robinson Award has been presented by the WBA since 1994 to recognize women who, like Robinson, have captured the spirit of pioneering in the legal profession and have made a difference in the community.

Judith Olans Brown is an accomplished attorney in academia, government and private practice--a woman at the forefront of breaking so many barriers in the profession, she was among few women in her class at Boston College Law School, graduating in 1965. At a time without any formal support for women lawyers, Brown went on to be one of the first women to serve as a clerk to the Supreme Judicial Court in Massachusetts and then worked as an associate at Foley Hoag. She then served as Chief Counsel of the Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs. She then served as Associate Regional Counsel for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development here in Boston, where she was known as an expert in housing, urban development and discrimination law. In 1972, she joined the faculty of Northeastern University School of Law and as with so many of her career moves, became one of the first women to achieve the status of tenured professor at that institution and worked there until her retirement in 2001.

At Northeastern, she used her extensive experience to mentor other women in the profession. From her peers on the faculty to the many students whose lives she touched, she has always been a role model and a force for promoting equality. She is known for her efforts in making Northeastern a welcoming environment for women students and for helping to make the faculty more racially diverse. Indeed, Brown was always willing to read a colleague's work and provide guidance to women interested in entering academia. She focused much of her own scholarship on employment discrimination and gender issues, writing about constitutional law, analyzing feminist legal theory, discussing comparable worth, and aiming to bring both men and women into the fold on understanding how bias affects all of us in the workplace. Brown was a prime mover in establishing Northeastern's Women in the Law Conference and has continued to lead the pack on gender issues in her retirement. Many of Brown's students and friends recall her encouraging them to create their own personal "board of directors." It was a concept she took to heart and a role she filled time and again.

Among her many notable endeavors, Brown was one of the first women appointed to the Board of Directors of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, sat on the Statewide Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, and even served on the

WBA Board of Directors. She is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College and Boston College Law School. After her retirement Brown has continued in academia, teaching constitutional law courses in the continuing education programs at Dartmouth College and the University of Arizona.

Susan M. Finegan is a distinguished attorney and pro bono pioneer. A partner of the Litigation Section of Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky and Popeo PC, Finegan broke new ground by becoming the firm's first Pro Bono Partner in 2007. Managing 400 cases for the firm, she concentrates her practice in representing individuals in navigating the very issues at the core of the WBA's mission: domestic violence, sexual assault, housing, and political asylum. She is the former Legal Director of the Victims Rights Law Center, and has served in countless roles to improve access to legal services for low-income individuals, particularly women. For example, she sits on the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission and chairs the Supreme Judicial Court's Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services. She currently serves on the Massachusetts Commission on Judicial Conduct and the BBA Council, and previously served on the Massachusetts Judicial Nominating Commission and the Massachusetts Trial Court's Gender Equality Advisory Board.

A former member of the WBF Board of Directors, Finegan was a driving force behind the WBA's recent successful "Know Your Rights" program, an educational series for which the WBA will receive an award from the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations. Finegan's work has resulted in her receiving numerous awards, including from Jane Doe, Inc., Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly, Boston College Law School, Dartmouth College, and the Political/Asylum Immigration Representation (PAIR) Project. Likewise, under her stewardship, Mintz Levin has also been recognized for its extraordinary commitment to vulnerable members of society, including through the 2011 Adams Pro Bono Publico Award from the SJC, the 2010 Pro Bono Publico Award from the ABA for her team's work involving the passage of critical sexual assault, stalking and harassment legislation, the 2010 Champions for Change Award, and the BBA's 2009 Thurgood Marshall Award.

In addition, Finegan has demonstrated a strong commitment to training attorneys at Mintz Levin and beyond. At the firm, she chairs three committees - the Hiring Committee, the Pro Bono Committee, and the Litigation Section Associate Development, Evaluation and Advancement Committee - and previously served as a member of the Diversity Committee. Finegan is known for reaching out to women attorneys and helping them make success a reality. A mentor and friend to many in our community, she is most commonly described as an inspiration to her legion of fans in and out of her firm, as well as a role model in the fight for justice. Finegan is a graduate of Dartmouth College and Boston College Law School. She clerked for both the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

### **About the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts**

Founded in 1978 by a group of activist women lawyers, the Women's Bar Association boasts a membership of more than 1500 accomplished women lawyers, judges and law students across Massachusetts. The WBA is committed to the full and equal participation of women in the legal profession and in a just society. The WBA works to achieve this mission through committees and task forces, and by developing and promoting a legislative agenda to address society's most critical social and legal issues. Other WBA activities include drafting amicus briefs, studying employment issues affecting women attorneys, encouraging women to enter the judiciary, recognizing the achievement of women in the law and providing *pro bono* services to women in need through supporting its charitable sister organization, the Women's Bar Foundation.

The WBA Gala, the organization's largest event and opportunity for fundraising and networking, will be held on November 12, 2013 at the Copley Marriott Hotel.

For more information, visit [www.womensbar.org](http://www.womensbar.org).

