

January 10, 2021

Dear SLS Community,

The Women of Stanford Law Board is deeply saddened by the news of Professor Deborah Rhode's passing. Professor Rhode was a brilliant scholar, a beloved instructor, and a trailblazer for women in the law.

In retaining Professor Rhode on the faculty, Stanford Law School held lightning in a bottle for nearly half a century. By 1979, SLS had only hired one female professor (Barbara Babcock, who in a tragic coincidence also died within the last twelve months). Professor Rhode became the second; then she became an icon. To this day, she is the most frequently cited legal ethics scholar. In a moment where some lawyers are callously abandoning their principles for personal gain, this accomplishment is especially worth remembering.

Professor Rhode was a mentor to hundreds, and for those of us who could count ourselves in those numbers, we could also count ourselves lucky. It was clear how committed Prof. Rhode was not only to the advancement of women's legal rights but also the advancement of all women in the law - to her students and mentees as young women lawyers starting our careers. Death never makes much sense to begin with, but this loss, at this time, with this little warning, feels especially random and cruel.

And so we should honor Professor Rhode by living the same truth she lived by: Give your time and energy to others, not because they have anything to give in return, but because generosity is an endeavor worth pursuing in and of itself. WSL remains committed to honoring Professor Rhode's legacy and to actualizing her vision for an equitable and ethical legal profession.

In solidarity,
WSL Board '20-21 & Sarah Zandi, WSL Co-President '19-20