



The Women’s Section of the CCCBA Honors Feminist and Cultural Icon, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

“To make life a little better for people less fortunate than you, that’s what I think a meaningful life is. One lives not just for oneself but for one’s community.”

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg

The Board of the Women’s Section of the CCCBA mourns the passing of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a feminist and cultural icon who died on Friday, September 18, 2020. Her legacy and commitment to justice and equality for all will forever live on in our minds and in our hearts.

Justice Ginsburg was a champion and fierce advocate for women’s rights and equality. An early pioneer who paved the way for women like us to attend law school and become attorneys, Justice Ginsburg challenged and shattered traditional notions of women’s roles in American society. Through her groundbreaking civil rights work as a trailblazing litigator, to her many years serving as an incisive jurist, Justice Ginsburg spent her life fighting to ensure that all people were given equal protection under the law. A warrior for gender equality, Justice Ginsburg spent nearly three decades on the highest court in the land, never straying from her unwavering belief that equal justice under the law only truly existed if it applied to every single American.

When Justice Ginsburg spoke, people listened. That is why she became a cultural icon — the “Notorious RBG”. Even when she fell in the minority on the bench, she oftentimes ultimately won by persuading lawmakers to use her powerful dissenting opinions as support to pass laws, such as the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. Her inspirational dissents served as constant reminders and warnings of the potential consequences of some of the majority opinions, whether it be issues concerning adequate protection of voting rights or the argument that women’s rights are human rights.

Justice Ginsburg’s personal life is also inspirational. Despite graduating first in her class, she couldn’t get a job at a law firm because she was a woman. Instead of lamenting over this, Justice Ginsburg devoted her efforts to educating others. She became a professor at Rutgers Law School and Columbia Law School, teaching civil procedure as one of the few women in her field. Later joining the Women’s Rights Project of the ACLU, Justice Ginsburg argued some of the most important civil rights cases before the Supreme Court, helping to establish precedent that has been relied upon in many subsequent civil rights cases since their establishment. She was later appointed a judge, and in 1993, was nominated by President Bill Clinton to sit on the Supreme Court. For many – children and adults alike – Justice Ginsburg’s story has served as an endless motivation to push forward and fight for your dreams; to never give up and to not be afraid to push the boundaries.

In addition to her invaluable role as a civil rights activist, Justice Ginsburg was also a devoted mother and wife, who espoused equality in her own marriage. While adjusting to her first year of law school, Justice Ginsburg took care of her ailing husband and their child, taking class notes for him and doing whatever she could for her family. A mother herself, she challenged the stereotype that only the mother should be responsible for their children when they are sick or have a problem at school.

Justice Ginsburg’s life and work will continue to serve as inspiration for generations to come. Her friendship with the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia proves that while you may disagree with someone’s political views and ideals, you can still be friends and maintain your respect and integrity. She carried herself with poise and grace while acting as a relentless advocate for the less fortunate. Bravely and courageously fighting medical problems in her later years, including several bouts of cancer, Justice Ginsburg never skipped a beat going to work, vowing to continue her life’s mission through it all. We hope that each and every one of us can live up to the example that has been set by Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

As no one could say it better than the Notorious RBG herself, we leave you with some of our favorite quotes from Justice Ginsburg:

1. "When I’m sometimes asked ‘When will there be enough (women on the Supreme Court)?’ and my answer is: ‘When there are nine.’ People are shocked. But there’d been nine men, and nobody’s ever raised a question about that."
2. "My mother told me to be a lady. And for her, that meant be your own person, be independent."

3. "Women will have achieved true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation."
4. "Dissents speak to a future age. It's not simply to say, 'My colleagues are wrong and I would do it this way.' But the greatest dissents do become court opinions and gradually over time their views become the dominant view. So that's the dissenter's hope: that they are writing not for today, but for tomorrow."
5. "We are at last beginning to relegate to the history books the idea of the token woman."
6. "Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time."
7. "So often in life, things that you regard as an impediment turn out to be great, good fortune."
8. "Reacting in anger or annoyance will not advance one's ability to persuade."
9. "When a thoughtless or unkind word is spoken, best tune out."
10. "Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."
11. "You can't have it all, all at once."
12. "I'm a very strong believer in listening and learning from others."
13. "In the course of a marriage, one accommodates the other."
14. "In every good marriage, it helps sometimes to be a little deaf."
15. "A gender line ... helps to keep women not on a pedestal, but in a cage."
16. "If you want to be a true professional, do something outside yourself."
17. "Reading is the key that opens doors to many good things in life. Reading shaped my dreams, and more reading helped me make my dreams come true."
18. "Don't be distracted by emotions like anger, envy, resentment. These just zap energy and waste time."
19. "You can disagree without being disagreeable."
20. "If you have a caring life partner, you help the other person when that person needs it. I had a life partner who thought my work was as important as his, and I think that made all the difference for me."
21. "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception."
22. "I would like to be remembered as someone who used whatever talent she had to do her work to the very best of her ability."

Thank you, Justice Ginsburg, for all that you did and for all that you will continue to do through the inspiration of your life and the spirit of your words. Rest in peace. Rest in power.

** The Women's Section has signed onto a letter written by the Lawyers Club of San Diego and addressed to Governor Gavin Newsom requesting that the State of California declare a holiday in honor of Justice Ginsburg. More to follow as this develops.*