

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Joette Katz

Date 2016 December 14

Primary Maker Joette Katz

Description Oral history interview with Joette Katz who was interviewed by Ernie Teitell on December 14, 2016 for the Connecticut Bar Foundation's History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession Project. Topics Discussed: - Early Life and Family: Joette Katz, born in 1953, grew up in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Her parents worked in the garment business. She describes her childhood as growing up in a "democracy" where she was encouraged to argue and where her parents made it clear she could pursue any career she desired. - Education: Katz attended a small private high school where she was involved in many activities. She went to Brandeis University for college and then directly to UConn Law School. - Marriage: She married Philip Rubin, who was getting his PhD in Psycholinguistics, while still in college. - Early Legal Career: After law school, Katz decided to specialize in criminal law, inspired by Atticus Finch. She initially worked at a small firm. From 1978 to 1981, she worked in the appellate unit of the Public Defender's Office. From 1981 to 1983, she worked as a public defender in Bridgeport, handling at least 120 serious felony cases at a time. During this time, she was also a member of Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund and helped draft the rape shield statute. - Experiences as a Woman in the Legal Profession: During her time as a trial lawyer, Katz faced challenges, especially when she was pregnant. She also encountered instances of gender

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bias from judges and male adversaries. - Chief of Legal Services and Appellate

Work: While pregnant, Katz applied for and became the Chief of Legal Services. -

Gaines v. Manson Supreme Court Case (1984). - Becoming a Trial Judge: Katz

was appointed a judge in 1989. In October 1989, she presided over the high-

profile Bloomingdale's homicide case in Stamford. After a few criminal trials, she

transitioned to juvenile cases and then to civil cases. - Judicial Selection Process

and Gender-Specific Questions: In the fall of 1988, during her interview for a

judicial position, Joette Katz was asked gender-specific questions by a

layperson on the Judicial Selection committee about childcare arrangements

and whether she had a housekeeper. - Appellate and Supreme Court Justice:

Katz spent less than four years as a trial judge before being called by Governor

Lowell Weicker's Chief of Staff to consider applying to the Appellate Court. She

also served as a Justice of the Supreme Court. - Commissioner of the

Department of Children and Families: Joette Katz had been Commissioner. Key

initiatives during her commissionership include improving family engagement

through announced visits and respectful interactions, significantly increasing

the percentage of children placed with family foster care and addressing implicit

bias through a racial justice lens. - Humorous Anecdote as a Supreme Court

Justice: Katz shares a lighthearted story from her time on the Supreme Court.

Dimensions Duration: 8 Minutes, 53 Seconds