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IN MEMORY OF JUSTICE RUTH BADER GINSBURG A CHAMPION FOR EQUALITY

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the second woman to serve on the nation's highest court, died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 87. Ginsburg spent a lifetime flourishing in the face of adversity and doubt. She was a legal, cultural and feminist icon. In her 80's, she became known as the "Notorious RBG." While we mourn this tremendous loss, we honor her as an unwavering pioneer for gender equality.

Justice Ginsburg was one of only nine women at Harvard Law School in 1956, where she and her female classmates were asked by the dean of the law school why they were occupying seats that would otherwise be filled by men. Despite the challenges of the time, Ginsburg proved to be an academic star, making law review at Harvard and then again at Columbia Law School, where she finished her studies. Her accomplishment of contributing on law reviews at two top universities was unprecedented.

Following her graduation from law school, she was recommended for a clerkship with Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, but was told that he would not hire a woman. Likewise, she did not receive an offer from any of the twelve law firms with which she interviewed. Eventually, Justice Ginsburg accepted a job as a professor at Rutgers University Law School in 1963, and then at Columbia Law School in 1972. Ginsburg steadily rose as a jurist and was instrumental in launching the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, where she argued over 300 gender discrimination cases.

Prior to joining the Supreme Court, Ginsburg argued six cases before the Supreme Court targeting discriminatory laws that affected both women and men.¹ She won five of them. In *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*, the Supreme Court ruled for Ginsburg's male client, in a challenge to a Social Security rule that allotted child care benefits to women whose husbands died but not to men whose wives died.

She was appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in 1980, and in 1993, President Bill Clinton appointed Justice Ginsburg to the Supreme Court. During her tenure on the Supreme Court, she ensured that all people were afforded equal protection under the law. This is evidenced by several landmark opinions, including the following:

- Justice Ginsburg wrote the majority opinion in *United States v. Virginia*, holding that qualified women could not be denied admission to the Virginia Military Institute.
- In *Olmstead v. L.C.*, Justice Ginsburg delivered the majority opinion securing a victory for the rights of people with disabilities. In the case, two women with mental disabilities were ordered to remain in a psychiatric facility even though some medical professionals believed they could live healthy lives in a "community-based program."
- Justice Ginsburg famously dissented in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.* where the plaintiff, a female worker being paid significantly less than males with her same qualifications, sued under Title VII but was denied relief based on a statute of limitations issue. She broke with tradition and read her dissent from the bench.

Justice Ginsburg's incredible legal career and unwavering commitment to gender equality and the rule of law, inspired millions of young women to follow in her path. We grieve her

passing not only as an extraordinary jurist, but also as a champion for equality. We will forever be led by her example and inspired by her excellence.

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¹ *Duren v. Missouri*, 439 US 357 (1979); *Califano v. Goldfarb*, 430 US 199 (1977); *Edwards v. Healy*, 421 US 772 (1975); *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*, 420 US 636 (1975); *Kahn v. Shevin*, 416 US 351 (1974); *Frontiero v. Richardson*, 411 US 677 (1973).

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