

Dedication: Zona F. Hostetler '57

Jayne W. Barnard

William & Mary Law School, jwbarn@wm.edu

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ZONA F. HOSTETLER '57

This issue of the *William & Mary Journal of Women & the Law* honors Zona F. Hostetler, a woman who found ways to use her legal skills to help a remarkable array of clients and shape many institutions at a time when women were first breaking in to the practice of law. Hostetler has been designated a “Trailblazer in the Law” by the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession.¹ Her four-part oral history for the ABA offers rich insights into her education and career, her family, and her values.²

In the 1960s, Hostetler worked on cases for the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) in its efforts to bring voting rights to African Americans in the South.³ She then began work on behalf of the Mattachine Society, a gay rights organization that was threatened with sanctions if it tried to raise money in the District of Columbia to fund its “immoral” programs.⁴ Hostetler prevailed on the Mattachine Society’s behalf, beginning a life-long commitment to the LGBTQ community.

Hostetler was quickly tapped by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to serve on the board of its D.C. affiliate.⁵ She also handled many ACLU cases as a co-operating attorney over four decades.

Hostetler successfully argued in the D.C. Circuit for the right of Dr. Benjamin Spock to present anti-war speeches to employees of the then Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the National Institutes of Health during their lunch hours.⁶ She similarly successfully represented Professor Michael Tigar in his efforts to provide “How to Avoid the Draft” seminars to federal employees.⁷

She played an instrumental role in the creation of a funded national oversight group to create and assist legal services offices throughout the United States. That group today is the Legal Services Corporation.

1. *Women Trailblazers Project*, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/senior_lawyers/resources/women_trailblazers_project.html [<https://perma.cc/C5LM-56QU>].

2. See Interviews by Joan Goldfrank with Zona Hostetler, *infra* notes 13, 14, 16 & 17.

3. Most of the narrative contained in this tribute come from a biography accompanying Hostetler’s Oral History. *Zona F. Hostetler*, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women_trailblazers/hostetler_bio_authcheckdam.pdf [<https://perma.cc/EPB6-FFPG>].

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.*

6. See *Reiss v. Finch*, 419 F. 2d 760 (D.D.C. 1969); see also *id.*

7. *Zona F. Hostetler*, *supra* note 3.

As director of the D.C. Bar's Office of Public Interest Activities in the 1970s, Hostetler created the first bar dues "check off" program through which lawyers could easily support local legal aid offices.⁸ This "check off" program was adopted by many other bar organizations and has raised millions of dollars since Hostetler first imagined it. She was a founding and active member of the D.C. Bar Foundation.⁹

Hostetler launched the first Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs focusing on poverty issues: landlord-tenant, domestic violence, police harassment, and welfare rights.¹⁰

She drafted the D.C. Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) guidelines, by which lawyers could and did divert the interest earnings on their trust accounts to legal services for the poor.¹¹

Hostetler was a stalwart of the American Bar Association where she chaired many key committees: the Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities; the Committee on Professionalism; and the Immigration Committee.¹²

During her ABA years, Hostetler negotiated several thorny issues: whether the ABA should declare that judges' memberships in discriminatory clubs constituted a violation of professional ethics (it did); whether the ABA should take a stand on behalf of detainees at Guantánamo (it did); and whether the ABA should advocate for access to courthouses for people with disabilities (it did).¹³

Hostetler often advocated on behalf of women. She represented women employed by the State Department, arguing before the Foreign Service Grievance Board, and later in federal court, that the employees had been deprived of promotions and postings because of their sex.¹⁴ She authored an Amicus brief on behalf of the Women's Legal Defense Fund in *Mississippi University for Women v. Hogan*,¹⁵ arguing that single-sex state universities organized around notions of "women's work" or "men's work" were unconstitutional.¹⁶

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.*

10. *Id.*

11. *Id.*

12. *Id.*

13. Interview 4 by Joan Goldfrank with Zona Hostetler (Jan. 24, 2007), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women_trailblazers/hostetler_interview_4.authcheckdam.pdf [<https://perma.cc/TZU6-QBHH>] [hereinafter Interview 4].

14. Interview 2 by Joan Goldfrank with Zona Hostetler (Nov. 15, 2006), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women_trailblazers/hostetler_interview_2.authcheckdam.pdf [<https://perma.cc/89EW-FR6Y>] [hereinafter Interview 2].

15. *Miss. Univ. for Women v. Hogan*, 458 U.S. 718 (1982).

16. See Interview 3 by Joan Goldfrank with Zona Hostetler (Dec. 5, 2006), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women_trailblazers/hostetler_interview

Throughout her life, Hostetler has shown compassion, creativity, self-discipline, and sheer audacity. As a child growing up in Charles City County, Virginia, she attended segregated schools but knew many African-American children.¹⁷ She once asked in church “why it was that the black children had to go to a separate church if we are all God’s children?”¹⁸ (She found the response unsatisfying and soon thereafter left the church.)¹⁹

Hostetler put herself through William & Mary by working part-time during the school term and full-time during the summers for local law firms as a secretary.²⁰ Nonetheless, she was able to participate in several activities: Honor Council, President’s Aide, and the Debate Club.²¹ While at the College, she was a member of the only sorority on campus that admitted Jews—Alpha Chi Omega.²² At graduation, she won the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award.²³ Several years later, she was married in the Wren Chapel.²⁴

Hostetler was the first woman from William & Mary to attend Harvard Law School.²⁵ At the time, Harvard Law School had a quota of twelve women students each year, and Hostetler was one of the twelve.²⁶ Throughout her three years there, she never had a woman professor.²⁷ When she graduated in 1960, Hostetler was one of seven women remaining in her class, alongside some 500 men.²⁸

When she began work for Covington and Burling, there were no women partners and no part-time schedules.²⁹ While raising her children, Hostetler instead built a career piece-by-piece by volunteering, taking on short-term assignments, and making herself indispensable. During this time, Hostetler authored reports and recommendations on access to justice, delivery of legal services, Social Security reform, nursing home reform, unemployment compensation reform,

_3.authcheckdam.pdf [https://perma.cc/VGB4-VWUA] [hereinafter Interview 3]. *See also Zona F. Hostetler, supra* note 3.

17. Interview 1 by Joan Goldfrank with Zona Hostetler (Oct. 18, 2006), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women_trailblazers/hostetler_interview_1.authcheckdam.pdf [https://perma.cc/NG7H-GD23] [hereinafter Interview 1].

18. *Id.*

19. *Id.*

20. *Id.*

21. *Id.*

22. *Id.*

23. Interview 1, *supra* note 17.

24. Interview 4, *supra* note 13.

25. Interview 1, *supra* note 17.

26. *Id.*

27. Interview 2, *supra* note 14.

28. Interview 1, *supra* note 17.

29. Interview 2, *supra* note 14.

and juvenile court reform. She kept herself visible. She then returned to the full-time practice of law.

The term “social justice warrior” is bandied about cavalierly these days—sometimes with pride and sometimes with scorn. Without question, Zona F. Hostetler was (and still is) a social justice warrior.

JAYNE BARNARD*

* James Goold Cutler Professor of Law, Emerita, William & Mary Law School and Co-ordinator of Academic Events, 100th Anniversary of Women at William & Mary. She is former faculty advisor to the *Journal of Women & the Law*. JD, University of Chicago Law School; BS, University of Illinois.