

DEDICATION

MY FRIEND, CARMEN BEAUCHAMP CIPARICK

*Jonathan Lippman**

December 2012 saw the retirement of Senior Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals Carmen Beauchamp Ciparick following a long and brilliant career as a lawyer and a jurist. I have had the enormous good fortune to call her my friend for close to four decades. Judge Ciparick and I have spent a lifetime together in the courts that we love so much.

Our friendship began in the mid-1970s, when Judge Ciparick was the Chief Law Assistant of the New York City Criminal Courts and I was the Principal Court Attorney in the Civil Branch of Supreme Court, New York County. We had so much in common—both of us in the early stages of our professional lives, starting families, and building careers in the New York courts. We did not know then what lay ahead and that we would eventually be colleagues together on the Court of Appeals almost forty years after we first met. But what was abundantly clear, even in those early days in the court system, was that Carmen Beauchamp Ciparick was an exceptionally talented lawyer of great intellect, as well as a warm, delightful, and gracious person. She was genuine and caring, and we had a wonderful, mutually supportive relationship in our respective roles in the courts.

From day one, Carmen Ciparick was forging new paths. She worked during the day as a teacher in the New York City public schools while attending St. John's University School of Law at night, where she was one of only eight women in her class. Carmen became a member of the bar at a time when women—much less Latinas—were rare and not always warmly welcomed in the legal profession. Her first job after law school was for the Legal Aid Society in the South Bronx, where she served the legal needs of the less fortunate in society. Although her clients were suspicious of a

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woman lawyer, she quickly won them over. She met this first challenge in her legal career, as she approaches everything in life, with an even-keeled temperament, a great sense of humor, and an uncommon balance and humanity.

Judge Ciparick continued to be a trailblazer throughout her career in the courts. She joined the court system as assistant counsel to New York's Judicial Conference, the predecessor to the Office of Court Administration, where she was the only woman lawyer. She was in short order asked to serve as Chief Law Assistant of the New York City Criminal Court, where she was the first woman to supervise the court attorney pool. She soon became Counsel to the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City. When Mayor Koch appointed her to the New York City Criminal Court bench in 1978, she was the first Puerto Rican woman to serve as a trial judge in New York State's history. She was elected to the New York State Supreme Court in 1982. I personally was delighted that she was elected, with the added bonus for the two of us that we again were working together, as I was the Chief Clerk of the Supreme Court in New York County at the time. We were, as always, the best of friends and so enjoyed our years together at the majestic Supreme Court courthouse at 60 Centre Street in Manhattan.

On December 1, 1993, Mario Cuomo appointed Carmen Beauchamp Ciparick to the Court of Appeals, the first Hispanic and the second woman to be appointed to the high court—and she was off to Albany. Judge Ciparick's nineteen years on the Court of Appeals have left a lasting legacy both on the Court of Appeals and on the legal profession in our state. Her very substantial body of work includes more than four hundred insightful and well-reasoned opinions that have left an indelible mark on the jurisprudence of our state in so many areas including search and seizure, the death penalty, school funding, labor law, separation of church and state, and landlord-tenant matters, to name just a few. She has the ability to cut to the heart of complex legal issues with a clear and direct writing style, and she is never rigid or formalistic. Her opinions are tempered with common sense and a compassionate understanding of human nature, as well as a commitment to the liberties and rights of all.

Carmen and I relished our four years together on the Court of Appeals, sitting side by side on the bench, at conference, and in our adjoining chambers. During those years in Albany, she was the first person I would speak to in the morning in chambers and the

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last person I would see at the end of the work day. What an inspiration it was for me to see how diligently she prepared for court sessions and how focused she was on each and every case. Her game plan was always the same: to reach the right and just result both for the litigants and for our society. All of us at the Court of Appeals feel very fortunate to have been able to draw on her great experience and wisdom and her superb legal instincts and expertise—and it was remarkable how often she was able to use her considerable talents and persona to forge consensus and bridge differences among us. Carmen Ciparick always had just the right answer to difficult legal problems, and she could be very, very persuasive, as befits the wise, wise Latina that she is.

In that same vein, Carmen Ciparick has been a consensus builder throughout her career as a court administrator, a member of the Judicial Conduct Commission, the Chair of the Federal State Judicial Council, and her most recent work on the Task Force to Enhance Civil Legal Services and as Chair of the Justice Task Force, fighting the scourge of wrongful convictions in our state. In all of these roles, she has been dedicated to the public well-being and to the notion that each and every person is entitled to equal justice under the law.

In the end, Carmen Beauchamp Ciparick's career has been all about the pursuit of justice that is at the heart of our constitutional mission. But what is so exceptional is that this spectacular human being is in every sense the essence of the trailblazing judge. She is someone who worked her way up from humble beginnings as the child of a migrant Puerto Rican family in Washington Heights to the pinnacle of our profession on the basis of her talent and capacity for hard work. Yet, on a personal level, she has never lost her sense of connection and kinship with trial and appellate court judges and staff at all levels, and has always been ready to extend a hand to young lawyers and others coming up through the ranks of the court system. She is everyone's sister and best friend. Though she surely appreciates the importance and responsibilities of the lofty position she held, she remains today the same down-to-earth, warm, and gracious person I met forty years ago, and the most devoted and loyal of friends—believe me, I know!