

Nancy S. Erickson

In 1969 I joined NOW-NYC, after being discriminated in employment in virtually every job (including the Peace Corps in India) and job application since college. I attended meetings and conferences of both NOW and other NYC feminist organizations such as the Congress to Unite Women. On August 26, 1970 I was the treasurer of NOW-NYC, and the membership increased enormously after the feminist activities that day, including the famous march down Fifth Avenue.

Then I went to law school, where I kept involved in feminist issues by working on lawsuits and advocating for legislation helpful to women. While studying for the bar exam, I volunteered at the Women's Law Center, founded by attorney Emily Jane Goodman. It changed my career path, because the calls to the WLC from women demonstrated that they needed the most legal help from feminist attorneys in family law, not employment discrimination law as I had thought. After being discriminated against at my first job as an attorney (at a law firm), I became a law professor, teaching Family Law, Sex Discrimination, and other courses. Despite an excellent letter of recommendation from Professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was then teaching at Columbia Law School, I was turned down for early tenure at New York Law School on the ground that my scholarship demonstrated a "narrow, feminist point of view."

I then taught as a visiting professor at Cornell Law School (teaching Sex Discrimination law), got an LL.M. at Yale in 1979, volunteered for the ACLU Women's Rights Project, and developed a new course on Women's Legal History modeled after a similar course that had been developed at Georgetown by Professors Wendy Williams and Richard Chused.

In 1980, I moved to Ohio State University Law School in Columbus, where my first daughter was born. When she was about 5, I moved back to New York to avoid bringing her up in the sexist and racist atmosphere that then prevailed in Columbus. I worked part-time for a while to be at home more with my daughter and then full time in several jobs, including working from 1990 to 1995 for the National Center on Women and Family Law, where I specialized in custody, child support and domestic violence issues.

Thereafter I worked as a private practitioner, mostly representing battered women. In 1999, I began working at Legal Services in Brooklyn, again mostly representing battered women. To help me to critique bad custody evaluations that many battered women get, I got a Master's degree in Forensic Psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2005.

In 2007, I left Legal Services and again went into private practice. In 2010, I stopped representing individual clients and started a part-time position representing a social work agency (I handle those situations in which they are served with subpoenas for the records of their therapy patients or are otherwise asked to provide information regarding their patients). I am still involved with cases of individual battered mothers, but primarily as a consultant to their

attorneys, advising them on matters regarding custody evaluations and battered mothers who have PTSD and other disabling psychological conditions resulting from the abuse they suffered.

Along the way, I have written (either alone or with others) several amicus curiae (“friend of the court”) briefs for the United States Supreme Court and the New York Court of Appeals. I have also written over 50 articles and book chapters on law, including custody, child support, domestic violence, custody evaluations, family issues of LGBT individuals, and mothers with disabilities. My two fabulous daughters, ages 43 and 36, are both professionals, and I have an almost nine-year-old granddaughter.

Some of my most exciting moments in the practice of law have been when the courts have relied on my briefs to make important changes in the law. It is more difficult to know what impact my articles have had on the law. As for representation of battered women, when I win a case for them, I am not usually excited – just relieved – because they take so long, require so much work, and

However, there are so many changes in family law that are still needed, especially to protect women and children from abuse and to protect children from being placed in the custody of abusers.

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