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Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella to Deliver Virtual Commencement Speech



Cardozo School of Law is pleased to announce the virtual keynote commencement speech for the Class of 2021 will be delivered by Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Justice Abella is the first Jewish woman, and the first refugee to sit on the Canadian Supreme Court bench. She was born in a displaced-persons camp in Germany after World War II, to parents who survived concentration camps. She was one of only five women in her University of Toronto law school class and she has gone on to be a revered figure by both the left and the right and is the longest serving Supreme Court Justice in Canadian history.

Justice Abella spent a day at Cardozo with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor just weeks before the COVID-19 lockdown. They offered students an enlightening discussion about the comparison of U.S. and Canadian law and jurisprudence. It is a privilege to have her back with us to help celebrate the commencement of the Class of 2021.

A leading champion of human rights, Justice Abella was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada in 2004 after serving on the Ontario Court of Appeal for 12 years. She practiced civil and criminal litigation until she was appointed to the Ontario Family Court in 1976. She subsequently chaired the Ontario Law Reform Commission and the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

Justice Abella is the author of the 1984 Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, creating the term and concept of "employment equity." She has won 39 honorary degrees from top institutions around the world. Among her many posts in academia, she was a Floersheimer Distinguished Jurist in Residence at Cardozo Law School.