
In Memoriam: Katherine Vaughns

TRIBUTE TO KATHERINE LINDA VAUGHNS (1945–2013): COLLEAGUE, FRIEND, AND NEIGHBOR

TAUNYA LOVELL BANKS*

Katherine (Kathy) Linda Vaughns entered Howard University Law School as a first-year law student in 1967, my last year at that institution. We were not friends. I was a married third-year student busy with law review, anti-war activities, and writing for an underground newspaper, and she was a struggling first-year from California. I was a rabble rouser and she was a modest, conservative young woman with a Cheshire cat smile. I noticed Kathy only after the first semester because she ranked first in her class—she was smart.

I graduated that spring and Kathy transferred to UC-Berkeley. I did not see her again for sixteen years until a law professor's meeting in San Francisco. She remembered me and told me that she was quitting her job with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles to enter law teaching at the University of Maryland. I had been teaching since 1976, so we chatted briefly, but it took almost five more years before we met again. It was 1988 and I was interviewing for a teaching job at Maryland. After I was hired Kathy helped me find a temporary place to live.

Once at Maryland, Kathy was a good colleague, helping me to adjust to a new teaching environment and showing me around Baltimore, but we were not *really* friends. She was a political moderate, a single woman with two dogs, and I was a flaming liberal with two college-aged children. Nevertheless, she invited me to attend her favorite cultural events: plays at Center Stage, concerts at the Meyerhof, and ballet at the Kennedy Center.

We bonded over our love of theater and I joined her as a season subscriber at Center Stage. We sat next to each other at Center Stage for more than sixteen years. Sometimes we went to New York to see plays or to the Contemporary Theater Arts Festival in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. We had become friends.

* Jacob A. France Professor of Equality Jurisprudence.

We also bonded over our love of film even though our tastes differed widely. By this time we had become neighbors; I found a permanent home literally across the street from her house in Bolton Hill. We celebrated birthdays together and Kathy usually joined my family for Christmas dinner and other celebratory occasions.

My colleague Kathy was a dedicated, knowledgeable teacher who spent countless hours preparing for class, going over student papers, and worrying about student exams. Although not the most popular teacher, she had her fans, including a group of former students. These students loved her and kept in touch. She in turned helped some get jobs, met them for lunch and dinner, and sometimes invited her more accomplished former students to speak to her classes.

Her scholarly passion was immigration law. I never knew what triggered this interest. Perhaps it dates back to her childhood growing up in Berkeley, California. The Bay Area was a diverse place with many immigrants, domestic and foreign. Kathy managed to keep up with the constantly changing immigration law and often went to Washington to testify before congressional committees on proposed changes.

Her knowledge of immigration law was encyclopedic. She was able to recite the laws and regulations from memory. Thus it seems fitting that the subject of one of her two posthumously published articles, *Border Fixation: The Art of the Appearance of Security and Control in Immigration Reform*,¹ and *Of Civil Wrongs and Rights: Kiyemba v. Obama and the Meaning of Freedom, Separation of Powers, and the Rule of Law Ten Years After 9/11*,² was immigration law. The last article was co-written with her former student, Heather L. Williams ('11).

Kathy had the same kind of encyclopedic knowledge of civil procedure and I often consulted her on civil procedure questions. Sometimes when she responded with almost a law review article worth of information I reminded her that my mind could only absorb a *little* civil procedure. She would laugh. Her knowledge and appreciation of civil procedure explains why she liked to teach complex litigation.

As friends we often disagreed and it was during one of these periods that Kathy learned she had cancer. With all her family far away in northern California, Kathy swallowed her pride and told me of her illness. I tried to be a good neighbor and friend, driving her to doctor and chemotherapy appointments; sometimes sitting with her for hours while she received treatments; watching in amazement as she

1. 27 J. CIV. RTS. & ECON. DEV. (forthcoming 2015).

2. 20 ASIAN AM. L.J. 7 (2013).

prepared for class. She did not want to let her students down and only reluctantly stopped teaching when she became too sick to work. Teaching was her life. She is missed by many, including me.

Y L C

THE HONORABLE JUDITH FORD*

My cousin Katherine was born and raised in northern California. Our ancestors arrived in California in the late 1800s. Once they got here, they and their progeny never left—that is, with the exception of Katherine.

Katherine and I were daughters of two sisters—me being the oldest. There was ten years difference in our ages. That meant that we were not that close when we were growing up. But we were destined to move closer given the path we traveled. That path led both of us to law as our profession of choice. However in my case it was Katherine who really started me on my journey to become a judge.

While studying for finals at Boalt Hall at Berkeley, Katherine asked me whether she could come and stay with me. She had been living with her mother in Berkeley but they had had a falling out. Of course, she could come and stay with me. She was my cousin. While she studied, some of the time we would talk and I asked her what it was like going to law school. I had graduated from Berkeley many years before but I was not sure that I would be able to handle law school. She assured me that I could and walked me through some the material she was using to prepare for finals. She convinced me that I could do it. She was right.

It took me a while to realize that Kathy, as she was known by almost everyone she came in contact with, really did love being in Baltimore. Among other things she loved the change of seasons, something we do not have much of in northern California, but more important she decided that she was meant to be a law professor. There were good times and not so good times but she loved being a law professor and she loved her students.

There were also other things that made a big difference in her life. She became involved with theater and film in Baltimore. Kathy loved the theater and most of all she loved Center Stage. After she

* Judge (Ret.) Superior Court, Alameda County, California and Katherine's loving cousin.

became a trustee for the organization, the only present she would accept from me was a donation to Center Stage.

Her love for the theater also helped keep us bonded. When she was actively involved in the American Bar Association we would meet in various cities for the ABA annual meetings, but later the theater was usually the reason for my trips across country. On one trip I took my great-granddaughters Telesia and Jordynn to New York. The youngest one, Jordynn, had asked to go to the American Doll store while we were there. I mentioned our shopping plans to Kathy and she met us at the store and, of course, an American girl as well as the accessories to go with it were Kathy's gift to Jordynn. But the highlight of the trip was taking Jordynn to the theater. Kathy suggested *Wicked* and *Strangers on the Train*. The girls loved both shows and sang the music from *Wicked* for at least six months after they got home. They will never forget that trip to New York and their cousin Kathy.

The title of this piece is YLC. It stands for "Your Loving Cousin." Around the time that Kathy told me she was sick I started signing my email YLC and during the last months of her life that is how we communicated our love for one another.

I miss my cousin. I think of her almost every day, but she will continue to live on in the hearts of those of us who loved her.

KATHY VAUGHNS, BERKELEY PIONEER AND MY ROLE MODEL

EMMA COLEMAN JORDAN*

Kathy Vaughns was my inspiration to apply to law school. In the year I was born in Berkeley, California, there were only 642 women in the first year classes of the 111 law schools nationwide. By 1966, when I met Kathy in the Rho Chapter of the Alpha Kappa sorority at UC Berkeley, the number of women in the first year class moved up only a bit, and by 1966, there were 1,059 women 1Ls. The largest number of these were white women.

There were no role models. Kathy showed me the way and by her example helped me overcome my fears about aspiring to be a lawyer and applying to law school. Kathy left Berkeley in 1967 with a B.A. in hand. She entered Howard University Law School as a first-year student. After her first year at Howard, she returned to Berkeley

* Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law Center.

and entered Boalt Hall with Lloyd Took, a handsome Howard graduate in tow.

I dutifully followed her example.

Elsie Rumford, my friend and sorority sister, remembers Kathy as I do. Kathy possessed a big smile and an infectious loud laugh, which I can still hear today. She loved to socialize, gave wonderful parties, and her home in Los Angeles showed exquisite taste. She was a good dancer, had fun. Elsie says that Kathy was “sweet” and “we could make her blush.” Elise and Kathy’s mothers were pregnant together; Elsie has a picture of Kathy at Elsie’s first birthday party. Elsie’s aunt was Kathy’s teacher at Lincoln Elementary School and they became close friends at Berkeley High School. In college the Rho Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Sorority drew them even closer.

Kathy as a Godmother.

Elsie told me how she came to choose Kathy as the adoring godmother for Hassan, her second son. Kathy’s love for her Hassan was legendary. Elsie says that Kathy was the “most enthusiastic” of all the godparents of her three sons. Kathy adored Hassan as he grew into manhood. She showered him with thoughtful gifts. Elsie says she was surprised to see that in Kathy’s house here in Baltimore there was a “little shrine to Hassan” filled with pictures and mementos.

Kathy led a remarkable life, for which I have a personal debt of gratitude.

A TRIBUTE TO KATHERINE L. VAUGHNS

KAREN H. ROTHENBERG*

Almost thirty-one years ago I had just started teaching at the law school—and it was a pretty lonely place if you were a female. I could have counted on one hand how many women were on the faculty. I was really excited as a first-year professor to serve on the Appointments Committee because I was determined to recruit more women. I was thrilled that we struck gold that year. Both Kathy and Marley Weiss joined us, followed the next year by Jana Singer. In the years that followed we welcomed more and more female faculty—we had

* Marjorie Cook Professor of Law and former Dean, University of Maryland Carey School of Law.

created a “critical mass” and today we have an equal number of men and women teaching our students. But without Kathy Vaughns, we are missing such a special member of our faculty.

Kathy was a Californian—her roots, her schooling, her family, and her wonderful job in the U.S. Attorney’s office were all there. So her move to Baltimore was a real commitment on her behalf and she had to start to make new connections. Of course, she had her new family of colleagues at the law school. I must admit we had nothing in common on what we liked to teach—Kathy was so excited about teaching complex litigation, immigration law, and civil procedure—I could not stand civil procedure in law school. So we kept searching for common interests. After a few chats, it became clear we shared a strong passion for theater, as well as a desire to hire more women faculty. And when Taunya Banks joined us in 1989, we celebrated together—another colleague with a passion for the arts.

As a frustrated musical comedy actress, I would seek out any chance to talk about theater and to experience it. For Kathy, the link was with Center Stage. Not living in Baltimore, I did not know much about Center Stage, but after being friends with Kathy, you were going to know about Center Stage! And it soon became clear that Center Stage was something extremely special. For Kathy, it was her home away from home and she served on the Board for many years. Her face just lit up when she talked about the people on the Center Stage Board and the artistic adventures of the theater. She blossomed there and she loved brainstorming with Taunya and me on how we could make more connections together with the law school and the theater. Both the law school and Center Stage had a sincere and sustained commitment to their communities.