

Francis X. Dineen[†]

Joseph Goldstein was a person of truly great public stature in our profession. When he died in March of this year, he left behind a legacy of extraordinary accomplishment. Joe was a superb and devoted teacher, as a professor of law on the Yale Law School faculty for more than forty years. He was also a creative and brilliant scholar and a prolific author.

Joe started teaching at the Yale Law School in 1956, and I was a student of his three years later. As a teacher, he was provocative and demanding, constantly urging us to be more critical and precise in our thinking. I can remember him frequently asking, rhetorically, after reading the language in a statute or in a court opinion, “What does that mean? I don’t know what that means,” and then proceeding with a critical, sometimes devastating, analysis of the language in question.

Joe was a leader in bringing interdisciplinary thinking to the study and teaching of law. Much of his work involved the interrelationships among the disciplines of law, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis. Joe, himself, became a lay psychoanalyst in 1968. His groundbreaking books relating to the Best Interest of the Child have been widely cited by judges, scholars, and practitioners.

Although much has been written about Joe since his death, there is one aspect of his work that is not widely known. Joe was the original founder of New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and he served on its board of directors for many years until his death.

It all started back in 1963. At that time, the Ford Foundation had agreed to fund a new organization in New Haven called Community Progress, Inc., which was to revitalize and expand social service programs in the City. Joe was a consultant to the Ford Foundation, and he was asked for his advice.

He proposed two programs for Community Progress: one was to provide psychoanalytic training to elementary school teachers, and the second was, as Joe put it, “to establish neighborhood law offices to provide legal services to the poor, to provide them with an opportunity to discover and learn that the law and the courts could be a source of assistance.”

The director of the new organization, Mike Sviridoff, was told that he had to accept one of these two programs. He responded by saying that he really disliked both psychoanalysts and lawyers, but of the two, he guessed that he

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disliked lawyers less. And so was born the neighborhood legal services program in New Haven. I was fortunate to become one of those neighborhood lawyers.

The neighborhood lawyer program ran into problems almost immediately, as the leadership of Community Progress was unwilling to allow the lawyers to fully and freely represent their clients. Joe was adamantly opposed to any restrictions being placed on the lawyer program, and eventually the Ford Foundation agreed, with Joe's strong encouragement, to fund a new corporate entity, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, to run this legal services program. This program was soon looked to nationally, as a model, as legal services programs were established throughout the country under the federal Economic Opportunity Act.

Joe was always a passionate and determined advocate of free legal services for the poor. In the mid 70s, when the program was being threatened with defunding by the federal Legal Services Corporation, Joe and I spent many late nights preparing answers to complaints and interrogatories submitted to us by the unfriendly Regional Office of that federal agency. And we made many trips to Boston together to meet with the Regional Office to argue our case and protect our funding. But I knew that with Joe's forceful and uncompromising advocacy we would prevail. And we did.

Adequate funding was a constant concern at New Haven Legal Assistance, and to help address that concern, Joe helped found The Friends of Legal Services for South Central Connecticut, an organization that has been very helpful in providing financial support for legal services.

Joe's work for legal services for the poor is an important part of the legacy that he leaves us. He was passionately committed to this work. He will be dearly missed.