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Judge Marilyn Hall Patel: A Dedication

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**SYMPOSIUM ON
RETHINKING JUDICIAL SELECTION:
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF APPOINTIVE
SELECTION FOR STATE COURT JUDGES**

**JUDGE MARILYN HALL PATEL:
A DEDICATION**

*William Michael Treanor**

This issue of the *Fordham Urban Law Journal* presents the Fordham Law School symposium, “Rethinking Judicial Selection: A Critical Appraisal of Appointive Selection for State Court Judges.” The extraordinary collection of professors, scholars, judges, attorneys, and policy-makers who gathered at Fordham Law in April 2006 examined how we select judges for their posts, powerfully contributing to the ongoing debate about whether judges should be elected or appointed and insightfully examining both classic and new models for appointment. The papers presented grapple with an issue that is both timely and of the most fundamental importance to our legal system. I am confident that this symposium will profoundly influence thinking about judicial selection in the years to come.

At the core of our discussion of how we select judges, one goal remains crucial—that regardless of *how* we select judges, we must ensure that we select *great* judges. The judiciary protects the values we prize most as a society. The judges who sit on the bench are the guardians of our liberties and they protect our democratic processes. Theirs is a critical role in the preservation and protection of the rule of law. Their integrity and their ability are of vital importance.

As we publish this collection of articles and essays written by those endeavoring to establish the very best ways to select judges, it is only fitting that we dedicate this book to a judge who stands as one of the nation’s finest examples of what it means to serve in this noble office.

Appointed to the Federal District Court for the Northern District of California in 1980, Judge Marilyn Hall Patel became Chief

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Judge in 1997. She stepped down from that post in 2004, after superbly guiding the court for seven years, and she continues to serve as an active judge on the court today. A graduate of Fordham Law School, she has been a pioneer for women in the judiciary, the first woman to serve as a judge in the Northern District of California and the first woman to hold the position of Chief Judge in that district.

Judge Patel is known as a judge of the greatest independence and integrity, and her opinions reflect both her concern with the judicial craft and her inspiring commitment to justice and fairness. During her tenure on the Northern District of California, she has issued a series of landmark decisions: she vacated the conviction of a Japanese-American man who had resisted being placed in government internment camps during World War II; boldly declared the gas chamber to be a cruel and unusual form of punishment; ensured the integration of the San Francisco Fire Department; handed down a famous decision in the Napster case, setting in motion a course that altered the future of the distribution of music on the Web; and demanded that retailers provide services for the legally blind in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Her extraordinary and influential jurisprudence has been marked by a commitment to helping all people receive fair treatment under the law and by dedication to the principle that the law should ensure that opportunities are promoted, not denied.

As we dedicate this book to her, it is the hope of Fordham Law that the outstanding career and character of Judge Marilyn Hall Patel will stand as a model; that, as we seek the best methods by which to select judges, we keep in clear sight what qualities are essential and noble in those judges we choose. Judge Patel stands as an example of the integrity, objectivity, insight, and vision that are requisite in a truly great judge.

We honor Judge Patel for her contribution to the legal system, her commitment to her alma mater, her ongoing role in creating opportunities for women in the judiciary, and her landmark jurisprudence. It is with great pleasure that we dedicate this book of the *Fordham Urban Law Journal* to Judge Marilyn Hall Patel.