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Joseph Solomon Dedication of Bronze Bust

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Joseph Solomon
Dedication of Bronze Bust
Columbia University School of Law
May 20, 1987

Joe Solomon's life and career have been marked by accomplishment and distinction. He rose from poverty to become a partner in the law firm that had employed him as a \$10 a week messenger. Over the years, he has given of himself unstintingly in the service of his clients and his profession. His work in the field of wills, trusts and estates has established him as a leader of the bar in the area of his expertise. Joe Solomon has given unsparingly of his time, talent and treasure in the service of others. His philanthropies are widely known. He has been a devoted patron of the arts as well as a benefactor of law schools and medical schools; of hospitals; of libraries; and of countless other institutions and individuals.

Of all the contributions Joe Solomon has made for the betterment of society and for the improvement of the profession he loves, it seems to me that none is more important than his service as a teacher of the lawyer's professional responsibility. Joe has long been concerned with the need for lawyers to adhere to the ethical principles that must guide them in the performance of their public trust. He has taught those principles by his own example as a practicing lawyer. He has taught them by serving as a member of the Committee on Character and Fitness for Admission to the Bar in the First Judicial Department. He has taught them

in his public speeches and in his private conversations. His dedication has found expression in the Joseph Solomon Award, given each year at our alma mater, New York Law School, to the graduating student who best exemplifies the qualities of excellence, character and fitness for the practice of law.

Time and time again, I have heard Joe Solomon say, publicly and privately: "The practice of law is more than just a business." By that message, he calls upon lawyers and law students to be aware of the special obligations of the legal profession and reminds them that the rules of the marketplace are not the rules that govern the bar. Is that message necessary? Unfortunately, it is. Personal gain, rather than professional responsibility, has become the concern of all too many lawyers. The "bottom line" of profit, rather than the "top line" of commitment, has become the focus for those who ignore our ethical guideposts.

Joe Solomon understands that our profession is based on commitment -- commitment to clients; to the courts; to brothers and sisters at the bar; and to the interests of society as a whole. He believes, as Justice Sandra Day O'Connor believes, that "lawyers must do more than know the law and the art of practicing it. They need as well to develop a consciousness of their moral and social responsibilities."

When Robert M. Hutchins was Dean of Yale Law School, he had a brief conversation with William Howard Taft, then Chief Justice of the United States. "Well, Professor Hutchins," said Taft, "I

suppose you teach your students that the judges are all fools."

"No, Mr. Chief Justice," replied Hutchins, "we let them find that out for themselves."

While law students may find out about judges for themselves, they need teachers to learn about their professional obligations. Joe Solomon is such a teacher. It is therefore a fitting tribute that this bronze bust be located in this place, where it can be seen by those who are taught to be lawyers. To them, it will be a constant reminder of the highest ideals of professional conduct.