

2005

# Introduction to the Symposium to Honor the Work of Professor Ruthann Robson

Penelope Andrews

*New York Law School*, penelope.andrews@nyls.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/fac\\_articles\\_chapters](https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/fac_articles_chapters)

---

## Recommended Citation

Andrews, Penelope, "Introduction to the Symposium to Honor the Work of Professor Ruthann Robson" (2005). *Articles & Chapters*. 1191.

[https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/fac\\_articles\\_chapters/1191](https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/fac_articles_chapters/1191)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at DigitalCommons@NYLS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles & Chapters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@NYLS.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SYMPOSIUM

*Penelope E. Andrews\**

Since her appointment to CUNY School of Law in 1990, Professor Ruthann Robson has been an invaluable member of the faculty and central to the CUNY School of Law mission of “lawyering in the service of human needs.” She has been an outstanding and inspirational teacher as evidenced by the many honors bestowed upon her over the years by several graduating classes.

Professor Robson has explored legal pedagogy in several articles, including an examination of grading and scholarly production by students. Most significantly, she has thoughtfully investigated ways of integrating issues of sexuality into the classroom.

Her ground-breaking scholarly endeavors in the area of legal theory, and specifically lesbian legal theory, have earned her the title of “mother of lesbian legal theory.” An intrepid theorist and advocate, she has explored the theory of equality in its various configurations in order to substitute a narrow formalistic approach with one that embraces a comprehensive or substantive import. She has achieved this by devoting her time to developing a specifically lesbian notion of equality, which incorporates critiques of equal protection and family law jurisprudence.

Her body of scholarship is testament to a tireless thinker not discouraged by, on the one hand, tried and tested assumptions, or, on the other, untested propositions. Refusing to succumb to cynicism, she continuously pushes theoretical boundaries to explore creative theories and approaches that will further the public interest legal project.

Professor Robson has also excelled as a writer outside of the formal legal theory paradigm. As the author of two novels and several short fiction collections, her work has been widely recognized.

---

\* Penelope Andrews, Professor of Law at the City University of New York School of Law, was born in Cape Town, South Africa, and received her B.A. and LL.B. degrees from the University of Natal in Durban. She worked at the Legal Resources Centre in Johannesburg before pursuing graduate studies at Columbia University, where she received an LL.M. degree. She is active in a variety of international human rights and peace organizations, and is a member of the board of the Welfare Law Center, the Law and Society Association and the Friends of the Constitutional Court of South Africa. She is a contributing co-author of *THE POST-APARTHEID CONSTITUTIONS: PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH AFRICA'S BASIC LAW* (Penelope Andrews & Stephen Ellmann eds., 2001).

Additionally, she has used the genre of “creative nonfiction,” writing in experimental forms, to address theoretical issues.

In light of Professor Robson’s countless achievements and specifically her important contributions to the field of legal theory, legal pedagogy, and law and literature, the CUNY School of Law decided to honor her work by hosting a symposium on November 6, 2004. An impressive group of scholars, practitioners, and advocates from around the country gathered to pay tribute to Professor Robson. Several papers presented at the symposium are reproduced in this volume.

It was easy to gather the array of impressive speakers who participated in the symposium and who contributed to this volume. The symposium participants willingly agreed to travel to New York to participate in the event—a testament to the esteem with which Professor Robson is regarded amongst her peers.

It was my pleasure to serve as the conference organizer and coordinator and in particular to work with Shira Galinski (3L) and Hollis Pfitsch (3L) and the students of the *New York City Law Review* to make the symposium a success. A special thanks should go to Dean Glen for providing the funding for the symposium, Professor Andrea McArdle for useful insights during the planning process, Maureen McCafferty, Sherry Scott, and Carol Rosenthal for administrative support, and to the rest of the faculty, staff and administration, especially the technical support staff, for their assistance, support and participation.

I hope that this volume elicits as much discussion and enthusiasm as the symposium did and that its many contributions will inspire continued analysis of the important issues raised.