

**Oral History of Dean Katherine Shelton Broderick**  
**Epilogue**

MR. GROSS: As an epilogue, as one of potentially many epilogues, you mentioned the Black Farmers Project, and I wanted to get this on the record in case we want to include this in your oral history. This is not something, to my memory, that we've discussed, so I'd love to hear about it.

MS. BRODERICK: I'd love to tell you about it. It's one of the things I'm proudest of. I have two last things that I will tell you about, my last spring break, and I will tell you about the *Black Farmers* case.

In 2014 or thereabouts, I received a telephone call from our board member, Andy Marks, who is a former president of the D.C. Bar and who was co-lead counsel on the *Black Farmers* case, and Andy said, "Shelley, I am enormously proud of having participated in the first *Black Farmers* case. As you know, the Department of Agriculture discriminated against black farmers, and they did not get loans in the way that white farmers did and lost their farms in many cases and were discriminated against, and we brought suit, and we did a lot of things right, but we left out, because we closed the class action period too soon, we missed 15,700 black farmers. And the second thing that we got wrong was that we never warned our clients that there would be tax consequences, potentially state and federal, and so when black farmers got a \$50,000 settlement, they went out and bought a new truck or tractor and they didn't save money for taxes, and that was devastating for many. So we've reopened the case, and reopened

the class, and 15,700 black farmers have been added to the case. We are in settlement talks, and you have a Tax Clinic, and I would like you to find a way to have UDC Law help black farmers understand the tax consequences.” I jumped at the chance, and, after my surgery in 2014, I negotiated this from my couch. We hired a couple of alums and worked with our Tax Clinic, and we prepared a frequently asked questions. We developed a list of all the free tax providers, mostly in the southern states, so that we could have that available on the website. The president of the SBA, Bob Newman, who was an African-American man in his 40s, did a video in which he played a black farmer and talked about tax consequences and where to go to get help.

MR. GROSS: SBA?

MS. BRODERICK: Student Bar Association. And then we opened up a call center in the law school, and we had students earn their community service, 40-hour credit, and alumni volunteers, and we personally spoke with more than 5,000 black farmers who got their settlements, and in that settlement notice were told that they could contact us on the website or call center and get the help they need to deal with their taxes.

Then we did a symposium, and we brought in Paul Friedman, the judge in the case, Andy Marks, co-lead counsel on the case and the ombudsman, and we packed our moot courtroom with hundreds of people who came out to learn more about that. I had students tell me it was the

most meaningful thing. The fact that this amazing case happened and they got to play a role in it was very important to them.

I also wanted to tell you that, again in trying to be intentional about my departure and send the right messages, I wanted to participate in our annual service learning trip this year. I participated in the first one in 2007, and I went to New Orleans with more than forty of our students and several faculty members and administrators, and we walked thirty-nine people out of jail who'd been locked up longer than they would have been had they been found guilty and served the maximum sentence. We represented dozens and dozens of people to help them get their paperwork on their ownership of their homes so that they could access the Road Home federal funding, and we worked on Small Claims Court and Know Your Rights for some of the largely Hispanic workers who came in, got hired to work on houses and then got stiffed, didn't get paid, to let them know that we're not going to ask you about whether you're legally in this country, if you work, you get paid. We did amazing work in the very first one.

Every year since, our students and faculty have gone to Biloxi, Mississippi after the BP spill, they've gone to the border in Arizona and in Texas to help families. So the service learning team talked to me about whether I thought we should go to the border again and they proposed another alternative, which was there's a little family detention center, the only one in the country, that takes fathers and mothers with their children,

and it's in Berks, Pennsylvania, and it's really the road less taken. The sexy schools go to the borders, but Berks, Pennsylvania, doesn't have the number of volunteers they need, and they have a huge need. I thought that was good, maybe we could adopt Berks Detention Center and really make a difference there. It would be close enough that you wouldn't have to go the whole week. We could go more than once during the year and so forth, and so under the leadership of Professor Lindsay Harris, who's a crackerjack immigration and human rights professor, about a dozen of us went to Berks and we were embedded in the family detention center for a week, and we successfully represented 78 families during that week who had come to this country, fleeing for their lives, fleeing gang rape and torture, horrible circumstances, take-your-breath-away circumstances, that they went through making the credible fear claim and securing release into this country so they can have their chance for a day in court and live undetained until they get that chance to show whether or not they're a candidate for asylum. It brought me close to our students.

I also taught this year. I co-taught with Matt Fraidin, of our externship program, and helped place students in the Public Defender and other placements. It was just a wonderful time, and I was honored at graduation this year. Our students asked if I would be their marshal and lead them across the threshold into their new careers. So I was honored to lead the march in for graduation. It was magic.

MR. GROSS: When you say that the spring break trip was intentional and connected with your decision to step down, what do you mean by that?

MS. BRODERICK: I grew up Catholic, and there's a helping those in need piece of that, and it blends into that servant-leader idea, and as Dean, and believe me, don't let the new dean hear this, but there's a lot of stuff that you do. I have gotten staff members and students out of jail, personally going down to court or to jails. There are a thousand things not in any job description. You find out as dean that you get sued personally when someone flunks Contracts or for a million other reasons, for race discrimination, sex discrimination, gender discrimination. I never lost one of those cases, but there are a lot of parts of it, and I wanted to be visible in our community to shine a light in a way that a dean can on our service learning, on who we are at our core, and I felt that I could best do that by actually doing it and not just talking about it. Some years I haven't been able to do it. My husband was sick, I couldn't leave for a week for many years, and I had an ABA visit during one of them, and so on. But I was able to do it, and I made the decision early on. I attended the class all semester. I read the materials. I read the book that was assigned. I watched the movies that were assigned. I benefited, of course as always happens, I benefited the most from learning about our students. Our students are themselves dreamers. One of our students came to this country from I believe Columbia when his parents fled for their lives, and they ended up in New York, and he was pumping gas after college because it was the only job he could get without

citizenship, and one of the people he was pumping gas for was a lawyer and he got to be friends with him, and that lawyer is now a judge. He got his citizenship, he came to law school, he did the service learning trip, and he was going to spend the summer clerking for the judge that he met when he was pumping gas. You can't make that stuff up. I've had a wonderful career. How did I get so lucky?

MR. GROSS: Let's end on that.