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Remarks At Monroe Freedman's Memorial

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REMARKS AT MONROE FREEDMAN'S MEMORIAL*

*Dean Eric Lane***

I am Eric Lane, the Dean of the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University. I want, first, to welcome all of you to our Remembrance of Professor Monroe Freedman who passed away last February.

We are so pleased that so many of you have taken the time to come to Hofstra to share memories of Monroe and to offer a tip-of-the-hat in tribute to the extraordinary life of Monroe Freedman: a family man, Jew, teacher, mentor, scholar, activist, and colleague. Just accomplishing what Monroe did in the field of legal ethics would have been enough success for most of us, but not Monroe.

Monroe was on a mission, as our former Dean, and now President, Stuart Rabinowitz said last year, "to instill in all of us, his passionate belief that, through law and social action, we could improve the lives of everyone."

This is his story, and the story we plan to tell.

I will start with my part. When I was hired by Monroe, thirty-nine years ago, he gave me two directives, which have been my guiding principles throughout my extensive career at Hofstra as both Professor and Dean: "Be a great teacher, and make a difference." No person that I know has embodied these ideals, both personally and professionally, better than Monroe Freedman.

My last memory of Monroe is a discussion we had only a month or so before he died. It was about a plan he had to celebrate and teach about the powerful role lawyers have played and, of course, in his unshakable view, should play in our ever ongoing struggle for social and civil

* These remarks are a rendition of Dean Eric Lane's speech given at a memorial held for Monroe Freedman on September 30, 2015, at the Hofstra University Club.

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justice. Before his illness brought it to an end, he had already started a class on this subject, in which many extraordinary lawyers were to appear, including his long-time friend, co-author, and, as she has called herself, “intellectual wife,” Abbe Smith, who will be speaking later this evening. He was excited to have started planning a book on this topic with a Hofstra colleague, Jennifer Gundlach, who will also be offering some remarks.

As I listened to him, I could only think of how tall and dignified, and smart and caring, and filled with humor and curiosity he was—as he always was. And this, despite the incredible weight of loss that had settled on his shoulders over the last many years, through the loss of his beloved wife, Audrey, and two of his children, Caleb and Sarah. How could he do this all?

What an extraordinary man.

Monroe Freedman. What an extraordinary man. A life well lived. A guide for us all.