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## 2008 Law Day Draws Crowd

**5/02/08--BOSTON COLLEGE LAW SCHOOL CELEBRATED THE 50TH ANNUAL LAW DAY ON TUESDAY, APRIL 29 AT THE SEAPORT HOTEL AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN DOWNTOWN BOSTON.**

5/02/08--Boston College Law School celebrated the 50th annual Law Day on Tuesday, April 29 at the Seaport Hotel at the World Trade Center in downtown Boston. Sponsored by the Alumni Association, and raising money for the Law School's Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP), the event drew well over 300 people.

Every year, the Association recognizes distinguished alumni and others as the recipients of special awards for their contributions to the legal community and BC Law School. This year, four awards were presented: the St. Thomas More Award, William J. Kenealy Award, Hon. David S. Nelson Public Interest Law Award, and the Special Service Award for Distinguished Service to LAB.

The St. Thomas More Award was given to Kerry Kennedy ('87) in recognition of her devotion to upholding international human rights ([click here for a PDF copy of her speech](#), and see below for the text of Professor Bloom's introduction). Kennedy delivered a moving speech on what she considers to be the 11 assaults against human rights by the Bush administration, as well as the great strides that have been made for human rights in foreign countries since her own graduation from law school.

The William J. Kenealy Award went to David C. Weinstein ('75) for his dedication to BC Law, including his service on the Board of Overseers. Josephine McNeil ('87) and Penny M. Venetis ('89) were the recipients of the Hon. David S. Nelson Public Interest Awards, and the Special Service Awards for Distinguished Service to LAB (Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau) were given to Professor Charles H. Baron and Donald K. Stern.

Profits from Law Day will benefit LRAP, a program that assists young lawyers pursuing careers in the public sector in repaying their student loans. This year's LRAP committee awarded over \$260,000 to an unprecedented 65 recipients.

Law Day was established in 1958 by Presidential proclamation to promote equality and justice under law, encourage the observation and enforcement of law and foster a respect for law and acknowledge its vital place in the everyday lives of citizens. The Boston College Law School has celebrated Law Day since its inception in 1958.

*Professor Robert Bloom's speech introducing Kerry Kennedy* ([click here for a PDF copy of her speech](#))

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to introduce Kerry Kennedy from the class of 1987. I have only been allocated a few moments to capture for you the qualities and accomplishments of this remarkable graduate.

Father Robert Drinan, of blessed memory, our former dean and a founding father of the international human rights movement, who was particularly proud of Kerry, would often quote the Hammurabi Code which said that the purpose of law was to protect the powerless from the

powerful. Kerry has devoted her entire legal career to this end. She has been a beacon of light for the powerless. A tireless advocate for issues involving children's rights, including disappearance issues and labor issues; for women's rights, including domestic violence, sexual slavery and assault; for indigenous land rights, abuse of prisoners and so many more issues involving basic values of human rights. As a law student Kerry brought the RFK Human Rights Award ceremony to the law school campus. She gave the award to individual mothers of El Salvador who had stood up against oppression and suffered through unspeakable horrors. It was the most moving event I have ever attended in my over thirty years at the law school.

After graduation from law school in 1988, she established the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights where she has served as the executive director and on the Board of Directors. This center seeks to ensure the protection of rights codified under the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. The center uncovers and publicizes abuses such as torture, disappearances, repression of free speech and child labor; the center has maintained a constant vigilance on Congress and the U.S. administration to ensure and to advance respect for human rights here and around the world.

She has led over 40 human rights delegations to over 30 countries. She has appeared numerous times on the major television networks in this country and around the world, and her commentaries and articles have been published in most of the major newspapers in the United States. Ms. Kennedy is Chair of the Amnesty International USA Leadership Council, a member of the Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women and a member of the Advisory Board of the Albert Schweitzer Institute and other boards too numerous to mention.

She has received many honors and awards. Let me just highlight a few- from President Lech Walesa of Poland for aiding the Solidarity movement. She has received awards from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for leadership in abolishing the death penalty. She was named Woman of the Year 2001 by the Save the Children Foundation. She received the Crossing Borders Award from the feminist press in 2003, and she received the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the South Asian Media Awards Foundation.

One of Kerry's lasting legacies is the book *Speak Truth to Power: Human Rights Defenders Who Are Changing Our World*, which features interviews with 51 human rights activists from around the world who stood up to injustice and oppression. Included in the book are such people as - Helen Prejean, Marian Wright Edelman, His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Elie Wiesel. President Nelson Mandela said this about the book, "This book is a tribute to the human spirit and proof of the capacity of one person of courage to triumph over overwhelming evil." From the book grew *Speak Truth*, a global education initiative to aid the fight for international human rights, a PBS documentary film, a play, and much, much more. The book has been translated into Arabic, Greek, Spanish and Italian.

Kerry, in her introduction to the book, contemplates how she can teach her three daughters why people who face torture, imprisonment and death pursue their human rights work when the chance of success is slight and the personal consequences so grave. Elie Wiesel in the book said, "What I want, what I've hoped for all my life, is that my past should not become your children's future."

Well, Kerry, I am reminded of the eloquent words of your father Robert Kennedy in his speech in South Africa as remembered by your uncle Senator Edward Kennedy in his eulogy to your father. He said, "Some believe there is nothing one man or woman can do to cure the world's ills then he quoted from your father- "Each time a person stands up for an idea or strikes out against injustice, [s]he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope building a current that can sweep down the mightiest wall of oppression and resistance." Kerry, you are forever teaching your daughters by your example. You have stood up against oppression. You have made this world a better place for your children's future. It is altogether fitting and right that your law school gives the highest honor the Boston College Alumni Association can bestow on one of its graduates the Thomas More award.

