

5-1-2013

Newsroom: Commencement 2013!

Roger Williams University School of Law

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Recommended Citation

Roger Williams University School of Law, "Newsroom: Commencement 2013!" (2013). *Life of the Law School (1993-)*. 161.
https://docs.rwu.edu/law_archives_life/161

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Newsroom

Commencement 2013!

Civil rights pioneer Morris Dees will address the Class of 2013 and receive an honorary degree during Commencement exercises on Friday, May 17.



BRISTOL, R.I., May 1, 2013 – As Roger Williams

University School of Law prepares to kick off its 20th Anniversary year, Morris Dees – a preeminent civil rights attorney and founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center – will address the Class of 2013 and receive an honorary degree during Commencement exercises on Friday, May 17.

The law school ceremony will begin at 1 p.m. on Friday, May 17, on the University's main athletic field.

The School of Law will also present an honorary degree to Rhode Island Superior Court Presiding Justice Alice B. Gibney during the ceremony.

Morris Dees



Born the son of Alabama cotton farmers, Morris Dees is the co-founder and chief trial counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) in Montgomery, Ala. After

launching his law practice in 1960, Dees won a series of groundbreaking civil rights cases that helped integrate government and public institutions.

Known for innovative lawsuits that crippled some of America's most notorious white supremacist hate groups, Dees has received numerous awards. These include Trial Lawyer of the Year from Trial Lawyers for Public Justice, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Award from the National Education Association and the Salem Award for Human Rights and Social Justice. In 2009, he was inducted into the Trial Lawyers' Hall of Fame by the American Trial Lawyers' Association. In 2012, the American Bar Association honored him with the ABA Medal.

Wayne Rogers portrayed him in the 1996 feature film, "Ghosts of Mississippi," about the murder of civil rights worker Medgar Evers. Dees was named one of the 100 Most Influential Lawyers in America by the National Law Journal in 2006. He has written three books: A Season for Justice, his autobiography; Hate on Trial: The Case against America's Most Dangerous Neo-Nazi; and Gathering Storm: America's Militia Threat. In 1991, NBC aired a made-for-TV movie called "Line of Fire" about Dees and his landmark legal victories against the Ku Klux Klan.

The Honorable Alice B. Gibney



The Honorable Alice B. Gibney is the presiding justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court. A West Warwick native, born to schoolteachers, she graduated from Rhode Island College in 1969 and went on to Catholic University School of Law in Washington, D.C., where she earned her law degree in 1972.

Judge Gibney began her career as a law clerk to Superior Court Judge Florence K. Murray, before entering private practice in Providence. She served as an assistant U.S. Attorney in the late 1970s, then

reentered private practice. In 1982, she became a Workers' Compensation Court Commissioner, and served in that capacity until her appointment as an associate justice of the Superior Court in 1984. Judge Gibney served on the state's Commission on Judicial Tenure and Discipline from 1991 until 2003, including six years as chair; and has taught as an adjunct professor at RWU Law.

Judge Gibney has spent much of her career concentrating on civil cases, including many medical malpractice lawsuits. When former Governor Donald Carcieri nominated her as presiding justice in 2009, he said: "Justice Gibney is admired and respected by her judicial colleagues and by all those who come before her courtroom. Considered a conscientious and gifted trial judge known for her ability to manage complex litigation and high case volume, Justice Gibney is well suited to serve as Presiding Justice."

About RWU Law: *The only law school in Rhode Island, Roger Williams University School of Law offers future attorneys a rigorous, hands-on legal education in a supportive, personalized environment. In its 20th Anniversary year, RWU Law proudly looks back on a legacy of outstanding scholarship, accomplished alumni, and profound impact on legal culture and communities in need throughout the state and region. It is both a signal achievement and an ongoing legacy – fulfilling the promise of the school's founding mission as RWU Law enters its third decade.*

About RWU: *Roger Williams University, located in Bristol, R.I., is a leading independent, coeducational university with programs in the liberal arts and the professions, where students become community- and globally-minded citizens through project-based, experiential learning. Offering 43 majors and a plethora of co-curricular activities as well as study abroad options, RWU is dedicated to the success of students, commitment to a set of core values, the pursuit of affordable excellence and to providing a relevant, world-class education above all else. In the last decade, the University has achieved unprecedented successes including recognition as one of the best colleges in the nation by Forbes, a College of Distinction by Student Horizons, Inc. and as both a best college in the Northeast and one of the nation's greenest universities by The Princeton Review.*