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## Hyman Remembers Philip Halpern

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# Hyman Remembers Philip Halpern

By Jacob D. Hyman

**O**n the wall of the faculty lounge in O'Brian Hall, a plaque reads:

*"In memory of Philip Halpern, Dean and Professor of this Law School, Public Servant and Judge, Warm Friend, who devoted a brilliant command of the law to the service of the highest aspirations for human brotherhood."*

The reasons for the recognition evidenced by the plaque were more fully set forth in the resolution adopted by the Law School faculty shortly after Justice Halpern's death in October 1963:

*"The faculty of the University of Buffalo School of Law acknowledges its profound sense of loss in the death of Justice Halpern. For almost 40 years he provided leadership and challenge to the Buffalo Law School as teacher, dean and friend. His extraordinarily acute and powerful grasp of the law was brought to bear upon the vast range of matters of public concern involving the law. Particularly in the struggle for the advancement of human rights, Justice Halpern applied his great legal gifts, with tireless energy and devotion, to one of the great social issues of our time."*

A native Buffalonian, Halpern received his LL.B. from the Law School in 1923, at age 21. After a year of study at the New School for Social Research in New York City, he was admitted to the bar in 1924, and practiced first for two years in New York City, then in Buffalo. From 1925 he was involved with the Law School, as teacher, dean and acting dean.

Dean Philip Halpern



Teaching several different courses, as well as practicing, he also was continuously involved with a wide range of public service activities. As early as 1927 he served as counsel to the Committee on Practice and Evidence of the New York State Commission on the Administration of Justice. He was director of the Erie County Bar Association, founded the *Erie County Bar Bulletin* and edited it for several years; was a member for many years of the American Law Institute; was appointed chief counsel to the New York Public Service Commission in 1944, elected to the Supreme Court in 1947, and appointed to serve on the Appellate Division, first in the Third Department, and later in the Fourth Department. The following year he was a delegate to the memorable New York State Constitutional Convention of 1938. In 1961, he became a member of the federal Commission on Revision of the Penal Law and Code of Criminal Procedure.

Throughout these busy years, he always found time to further his abiding and deep interest in the cause of human

rights. From 1954 to 1963 he represented the United States on the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. From 1953 to 1956 he was Principal Adviser to the Advisory Committee to the United States delegation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, on which Eleanor Roosevelt also served.

Accepting a National Brotherhood Citation from the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1954, he expressed hope for a peaceful world in which human dignity "may be strengthened and advanced," adding, "It is only a hope, but it is a hope on which we must stake the future of our children and our children's children, that if we succeed, may result in real peace in the world."

During a memorial service for Halpern on Nov. 17, 1984, at Temple Beth Zion in Buffalo, his sons Charles and James concluded their remarks with:

*"In an issue of the Stanford Law Review dedicated to Justice Robert H. Jackson, our father described Justice Jackson as a natural-born lawyer, endowed with great native ability who regarded the law as truly a public profession, whose primary objective was to serve the public interest through the compromising of differences, the vindication of rights and the defeat of oppression."*

*"In describing Justice Jackson, who was an admired mentor, Philip Halpern also described himself."*

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*Professor Jacob D. Hyman joined the faculty in 1946 and served as dean from 1953 through 1964.*