

# Larry Greenberg Interview

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## SPEAKERS

Interviewee: Larry Greenberg

Interviewer: Fatemeh Rezaei

### Fatemeh Rezaei

Hello, this is Fatemeh Rezaei. It's May 2nd, 2024, at 9am. I'm with Larry Greenberg. We are using the online Zoom platform, and we are going to begin our oral history interview for the University of Baltimore Stories, the 100th Anniversary Oral History Project. The purpose of this project is to celebrate the university's Centennial by preserving the memory of those influenced by the University of Baltimore over the years. We will be creating a digital archive and exhibit and making these recordings available online. Thank you, Mr. Greenberg. Thank you for giving us your time. I'm going to start with some simple questions.

### Larry Greenberg

Thanks for having me, by the way!

### Fatemeh Rezaei

Where and when were you born?

### Larry Greenberg

I was born in 1969. Matter of fact, next week, on the fifth, I turn 55. I was born and raised in Baltimore, other than four years up in College in Boston. I'm a Baltimore guy.

### Fatemeh Rezaei

Happy Birthday! Do you live in Baltimore now?

### Larry Greenberg

I live in Baltimore County, but yes.

### Fatemeh Rezaei

What was your family life like growing up?

### Larry Greenberg

Very supportive. My dad is, although he retired two years ago, he was an excellent trial lawyer. He had clerked for a judge and then went on to create a massive plaintiffs practice for injured folks. So, I learned through him that you treat everybody with respect. Both he and my mother instilled that you just always try to protect those who can't always protect themselves or speak for themselves. And I learned that early, early, early on. I mean, there were episodes with friends of mine, or strangers who became friends when I was, you know, 12 to 18. I would get them out of issues. And I realized this is what I need to do. So, to say that my family was supportive is an understatement.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

Do you have any brothers or sisters.

**Larry Greenberg**

My brother Mitch is three years older, and he is also practicing lawyer in Maryland. He does an excellent job representing clients in the criminal world and he also represents people who were injured on the job. He's been doing it for years.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

That's interesting. So, you have one brother--

**Larry Greenberg**

I have one brother and--

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

He's a lawyer, okay.

**Larry Greenberg**

He's a lawyer. So, I've been married for coming up on 30 years. We have two children. My daughter, who we always thought was going to be the lawyer in the family. She did mock trials growing up. Now she works for NYU and she's going to be a mental health therapist. My son, who for years never appeared interested in the law, despite his entire life being around lawyers every Sunday night dinner or all family events, he never wanted law school until his sophomore year in college. He took a business law class, and he called my wife and he said, 'I really like this.' From then on, the rest is history. He graduated law school Cum Laude and is about to take the bar exam. We are extremely excited for him and that he's going to come work with us.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

That's interesting. So, tell us where did you go to school?

**Larry Greenberg**

So, growing up, I went to McDonogh, which is in Baltimore County. I went there all 12 years, and then I went to Boston University. And then I switched from BU to UB, and I went to law school at UB. When I got to law school, I was one of those students where I just always wanted to graduate and work. I wanted to get out. School was important, no doubt, but I didn't really spend time with other students like

a lot of people do with their classmates. While I had friends there, sadly I didn't develop close relationships with my fellow students.

But I enjoyed the work aspect of it. I did a lot of interning and clerking, and I would hold over some internships depending on who the judges were. That was a great process for me, and I learned that relationships are extremely important in the practice of law. I learned this through my dad, and I teach my students this. The one thing that makes one person or lawyer better than another is your reputation. And I teach all my students, and my parents did it to me as well growing up, that the most important thing is that no matter what you're doing, do it correctly and make sure you have a good reputation.

Never lie. Never cheat. Just do your job and do it right. And, you know, when we take the oath to become lawyers, too many people forget that we represent others. Recently we've had a bunch of cases that has made me call into question people's ethics. It shouldn't be that way. It's just do your job and do it right, and recognize that we all have our obligations, but practice ethically at all times. Make sure you're always doing it right. I do thank my parents and my teachers for beating that into my head. Long answer [laughs].

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

That's fine. [laughs]. So, you went to Boston to get your bachelor's degree? Right?

**Larry Greenberg**

Correct.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

In what major?

**Larry Greenberg**

A major in sociology and a minor in political science. And, again, this is weird, I always knew I was going to be a lawyer from--It's kind of a silly story, but I was 12 years old, and we were down on vacation, and a friend of mine did something stupid, and the police came, and I sat there. And in hindsight, they probably weren't going to arrest this kid anyway, but I sat there and very calmly explained to the police officer, why you didn't have to arrest him.

And before I became a lawyer, I probably did that two or three or four times. Not that I hang around with bad people. But I just always knew that's what I wanted. And then I looked at school as how do I complete this so that I can get to where I want to be? And I literally hit the ground running. I think it was within days--or once I got sworn in, I tried a jury trial, my first ever jury trial, and I haven't stopped since. I love trying cases, I don't care where it is or when it is. That's a passion of mine.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

That's nice. So you were in Boston, and then you decided to go to law school. Tell us what happened. How did you choose the University of Baltimore?

**Larry Greenberg**

I will tell you that my perception of University of Baltimore - and not only my perception, but what has actually occurred at the University of Baltimore School of Law - has changed considerably in the last almost 30 years. For me, I always knew that I wanted to live and practice in Maryland. So why would I go elsewhere? I had applied elsewhere. Silly, but I did. It didn't make sense to go develop relationships elsewhere, and UB allowed me to meet local lawyers, judges and folks whom I would work with when I passed the bar. When parents call me and they say, 'Hey, my child wants to go to law school. Where do you think they should apply?' My first question is, where do they want to live? When all is said and done, build relationships early and often.

If you are going to live here, you may as well develop roots here. I'm not talking about local roots that people develop in prior to graduating high school, although they can help because you never know when old friends need help. There are people who are on the bench today that I went to high school with. There are people on the bench that I met in law school. I wouldn't have met them if I was in school elsewhere. It just doesn't happen, and likewise for clerking, why would I clerk for a judge or law firm in a different state? Sure, you get experience, but if you're coming back here, make them here. Make the relationships here.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

So, what was the reputation of the school that you chose to attend? I mean when was that? In 1991?

**Larry Greenberg**

Yeah, in '91. So, the reputation was and is similar to what it is now. It's just far superior now. This is the way that I speak with people, and I'm not just talking in Maryland, I'm talking all across the country. There were times when I was president of the trial lawyers, and I would go to different states for seminars and for meetings of the American Association for Justice.

You would talk to lawyers, and they would say, 'Hey, tell me about the University of Baltimore versus Maryland law school,' and I would say, I view, University of Baltimore as being far more practical, and that people who come out of University of Baltimore, have more practical skills. For the most part, students are ready to go practice on day one. Now, that's not for every aspect of the law, but it seems to apply for most.

Also, University of Baltimore has a lot of judges who graduated from the school. They have a lot of prosecutors and public defenders. And those are people who are coming out with the experience to get started trying cases to gain experience. And, while other law schools likely provide the same classes, I can assure you that UB students, built upon their legal knowledge, use their relationships that they formed in the last three years, to begin their careers. But for the most part, when we have functions at University of Baltimore, I see a lot of people showing up, graduates from UB, who have attained higher levels in the legal community and share their experience with students.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

That's nice. So, do you have any favorite memories from your time at UB? Like any classes?

**Larry Greenberg**

I do. I can tell you one of them. There was a professor who is no longer at the school. He was difficult. Difficult. He did what he should have done. Times are totally different now, but he would call on you, and if you didn't know the answer, you weren't sitting down gingerly. He would make it extremely uncomfortable. Now again, to go back to what I said before, not that I'm not a social guy, but I didn't really hang out with people.

You know, I went to school, I went to work etc. So, I'm like, I'm watching these other students give these incredible answers. And I'm like, I've read the same stuff. How is it that they know all that? And one night, I happened to go out with a group, and they had an outline from years before where it was the same thing, he would ask the same questions. Now, yes, in hindsight, that's cheating, and I didn't want to say it. But. number one, I never got that outline.

I learned, don't cheat. Because if you do, and he finds out--well first, forget if he finds out, you know, and that was the problem. But that always sticks out in my mind because it happened within the first semester of the first year, and it caused me to say, 'Okay, forget that.' That's not how I want to be. And it even solidified what my parents taught me growing up. Just do it the right way.

### **Fatemeh Rezaei**

So, tell us about your journey after graduation. What did you do after that?

### **Larry Greenberg**

I've worked, and worked, both professionally and in the community. I have a desire to just constantly do in my mind the right thing and just keep doing it. So again, you know, I tried a jury trial within a very short period after getting sworn in. And then I didn't stop. I thank my parents for giving me a platform to grow, and I jumped forward. I needed to move on so that the voices in my head didn't say, 'Oh, you're here because of your father.' You know, 'You got this because of--.'

So, I went on and I busted my butt to move forward and got involved in what used to be called the Maryland Trial Lawyers Association. Now it's called the Maryland Association for Justice. It's actually the largest specialty bar in Maryland, comprised mainly of lawyers who, for the most part, lawyers like myself who represent injured folks. So, whether it's medical malpractice, automobile crashes, work related injuries, MAJ is a consortium of very bright folks who desire to protect their client's rights. We want to make sure the system works properly both legislatively and in the courtrooms. That is why I got involved.

I became president of MAJ in 2013, and that took a significant period of work and time from my busy practice. One of the things that I learned was in the years leading up to my presidency how important it was to try to get laws that increase, rather than restrict, access to the courts. I learned there are a lot of problems with our legal system. You may or may not know this, but Maryland is antiquated in many ways. We have something called caps, which means that you could be horrifically injured, and you are capped at how much you can get for pain and suffering. In certain cases, you can get all your medical bills covered, but as far as everything else is concerned, the pain and suffering are capped.

We also have something called contributory negligence. Maryland is one of four or five states left that have it. Every other state is comparative. And what that means is that if you are 1% at fault, the person could have been drunk driving down the road, but maybe you were speeding, or maybe you made a left even though that person's drunk and speeding, you may have made a left that contributed to it, you lose as a matter of law. So since early 2000, I was involved with others in MAJ have been trying to change the laws to make Maryland conform with the majority of the country.

And yet to this day, even though there was a bill that passed the Senate this past session to modify the law as it relates to capping a verdict, the House would not entertain the bill. Regardless of how the judicial system works, we will continue to fight for justice, and we still fight for the citizens of Maryland. Most citizens do not know about these laws, do you?

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

Yes?

**Larry Greenberg**

No, no, I mean had you heard of the cap?

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

No, no, it was completely new!

**Larry Greenberg**

Yes. That's true for most people you talk to. When clients come in here and explain a situation in which they may be contributorily negligent, I am often forced to tell them that I can't represent them because of this law. They just shake their head, and then they'll call another lawyer and find out. The reality is that, recently with the collapse of the Key Bridge, you have a lot more people and politicians saying that the cap is unfair because Marylanders and businesses who were affected by the destruction of the bridge, will be limited on obtaining justice.

These caps, and insurance companies who provide insurance coverage for the people who caused this horrific tragedy, are trying to use the law on caps to limit the damages to families or businesses who were damaged greatly by the collapse of the bridge. Now, when people and businesses are being unjustly treated, now some politicians are saying that that cap is unfair. Well, all caps are unfair. We have been fighting that fight and we will continue to fight the fight. Because again, it goes back to why I started down the path of becoming a lawyer. You help those who in that case don't even know they need help.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

So, you have your own firm now.

**Larry Greenberg**

Yes.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

And how long have you been in this role?

**Larry Greenberg**

My father started practicing in 1966. He and Donald Saiontz, who's now part of Saiontz and Kirk, were partners for a few years. Then Donald wanted to get into the advertising business and my father wanted to become a solo trial lawyer. So, he started, probably in 1971 or '72 and he started his private practice. And then my brother and I were here for a long time before my brother went on his own. And then my father ultimately retired, and I took over the practice. And right now, we have two lawyers and are about to have one or two more.

It was always great in the beginning being a lawyer here, and not being a businessman because it allowed me to do my trial stuff, and I love it. I love the preparation. I love the actual trying or settling of cases. When I took the firm over, and in the years leading up to it in which I was technically running it, you know, it adds another level that a lot of lawyers didn't sign up for. I never had a case in law school teaching me how to run a practice. I really do think we should have something called, you know, Law Practice 101 and teach people how to do it because there are things that lawyers get in trouble with because they just don't know. If UB has it, I apologize UB. So, sorry.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

[laughs] So you have been teaching at UB as an adjunct faculty member for more than eight years. What subjects do you teach at UB? Talk about your experiences.

**Larry Greenberg**

Yeah, this was my ninth-year teaching at UB. I taught trial practice the first year and then I realized, I may as well teach what I love doing. So, I've been teaching trial advocacy now for eight years, and I love it. I view teaching as more than just imparting knowledge. Hopefully, since I am a practicing attorney and adjunct professor, I try to impart the realities of life and law so the students can absorb it before practicing. And in that, it's usually changing their mentality so that they understand law in the real world.

And the way I try cases is the way I teach. And it's the principal, I think it was Ben Franklin, he said, you know, 'Tell me and I forget, teach me, I remember, involve me, and I learn.' So, when I teach, I do real world examples. I have them actually get up out of their seat and do. They try cases within the classroom, and we critique each other, and you know, when they're done, they say, 'I want to be a trial lawyer, or I don't.' At the beginning of every semester the first thing I say other than Hello, is I say, 'raise your hand if you want to be a lawyer.' And you know, people laugh.

But then I say, okay, 'who wants to be a trial lawyer?' And some have confusion, because they don't recognize the difference. But there's a huge difference between being just - well not just a lawyer, because lawyers are great - but a trial lawyer takes a special skillset. It's not an easy job, but very

fulfilling. Even on the bad days. And it makes me very happy that I still get phone calls from old students telling me what a positive impact I had on their early careers.

I get phone calls from people who say 'I was trying a case, and I thought of you, or I was getting ready to try a case and thought what you taught us.' And they've called me and said, 'How would you do this?' or 'How would you do that?' Some of these people work for opponents of mine, yet we still have an excellent relationship. You know, these are people who work in all walks of life, in all different types of practices. They call me and they say, 'Here's a fact pattern. What would you do? How would you try it?' and I love those phone calls.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

Interesting. So you studied at UB in the 90s. Then, in recent years, you have been working at UB. So you have observed a lot of changes to the law school and also the university and changes on campus. Deans change. There are different presidents.

**Larry Greenberg**

Yeah, we're going through that now.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

[Laughs] Yes. Well, could you tell us about any big changes during these years that are noteworthy to talk about? Did you see anything specific that you can share with us?

**Larry Greenberg**

Sure. Have you seen our old building versus the new one?

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

Actually, I am there right now I'm in the Learning Commons.

**Larry Greenberg**

Okay!

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

So, is that where you were or was it different? When you were attending UB, were you in the Learning Commons building?

**Larry Greenberg**

I believe that's what it's called now where the police officers train? Yes.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

You know, I am actually in this building on the first floor. And I have been downstairs in the basement.

**Larry Greenberg**

They didn't believe in windows back then. No, no! [Laughs] The new building is definitely a big change for the law school. Sure! It is. The new building is beautiful. It is a symbol of power. I mean, you see it, it



is an incredible building. I see it every day. I mean, my office is two blocks up, but anybody who drives on 83 they see it. It's just beautiful. And it's a great building.

Dean Weich has been at UB 12 years. We developed a great relationship and through that, I began teaching. I have developed a phenomenal, I believe, relationship with the school. I was appointed Chair of the Dean's Development Circle for a year and a half ago. It's enlightening to see the behind-the-scenes of this great university and we constantly seek ways to improve the learning experience for the students.

It's not an easy job running a university. It's not an easy job being in a system like the University of Maryland. Now that Dean Weich has retired from UB, I am looking forward to working with Dean Reed, the new Dean. It is my hope that she will continue and increase not only the reputation of the University of Baltimore, but the skills of the lawyers who come out. I do look forward to continuing my relationship with the school. I think it's phenomenal.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

That's nice. Is there anything else about your time at UB that you would like to share?

**Larry Greenberg**

Nope. It's only getting better! It's like good wine. It gets better with age.

**Fatemeh Rezaei**

Okay. Thank you. Thank you so much.

**Larry Greenberg**

It was a pleasure. Have a great day.