RESOLVED, that the CUNY School of Law award Ronald Ellis, Dikgang Moseneke, and Radhika Coomaraswamy the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, at the School’s annual Commencement Ceremony on May 18, 2012.

EXPLANATION: Ronald Ellis was appointed as a United States Magistrate Judge in 1993. Between 1976 and 1993, Judge Ellis worked for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, specializing at first in fair employment class action litigation and eventually directing the Poverty & Justice Program. In addition to his equal employment cases, Judge Ellis worked as a trial lawyer on cases involving voting rights, health care, housing, education, and environmental justice. Judge Ellis has written on a variety of topics and has co-authored the chapter “Achieving Race and Gender Fairness in the Courtroom” in The Judge’s Book (2nd ed., 1994). Judge Ellis gained national attention when he was one of three judges assigned to the Bernard Madoff case.

Dikgang Moseneke currently serves as the Deputy Chief Justice of South Africa. As a teenager, he was arrested, detained, and convicted of participating in anti-apartheid activity. Sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment, he earned a BA in English and Political Science as well as a second bachelor’s degree in law while incarcerated. He later completed an LL.B. degree, all three degrees being awarded by the University of South Africa. Justice Moseneke has had a long and distinguished career as both an attorney and a barrister. In 1993, he served on the technical committee that drafted the interim constitution of South Africa, and in 1994, Nelson Mandela appointed him as Deputy Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission, which conducted the first democratic elections in South Africa. Justice Moseneke has served as Judge of the High Court in Pretoria, and in the Constitutional Court, before being appointed Deputy Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa. His community and non-governmental activities include chairing Project Literacy and serving as trustee of Sowetan Nation Building and deputy chairperson of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund.

Radhika Coomaraswamy has been the Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict at the United Nations, since 2006. In this capacity she works to build awareness of boys and girls affected by armed conflict and advocates for their rights and protection. She is also internationally recognized for her expertise in the subjects of violence in the family, violence in the community, violence against women during armed conflict, the problem of international trafficking, and women’s rights. Ms. Coomaraswamy previously served as the Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission and director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Sri Lanka. A lawyer by training, she has published widely, including two books on constitutional law and numerous articles on ethnic studies and the status of women.
Ronald Ellis

Ronald Ellis was appointed a United States Magistrate Judge in 1993. He received a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Manhattan College in 1972 and a Juris Doctor from New York University School of Law in 1975. Born in Louisiana on Independence Day in 1950, Judge Ellis has dedicated most of his legal career to being a civil rights lawyer and activist with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund ("the Fund").

Between 1976 and 1984, Judge Ellis worked for the Fund as a staffer specializing in fair employment class action litigation, as director of the Fund's Fair Employment Program from 1984 to 1990, and as director of its Poverty & Justice Program from 1990 to 1993. He also served as an adjunct professor at the New York University School of Law, teaching Employment Law for 2 years at the graduate position and Racism and American Law for 10 years at the undergraduate position. While employed at the Fund, Judge Ellis worked as a trial lawyer in 6 federal circuits in 12 states, dealing with voting rights, health care, housing, education, and environmental justice cases, in addition to equal employment cases. He took part in eight appeals to the appellate courts in three of the circuits. Judge Ellis has written on issues including trial procedures, witness examination, and statistical proof and has co-authored the chapter on "Achieving Race and Gender Fairness in the Courtroom" in The Judge's Book (2nd ed. 1994).

Judge Ellis gained national attention when he and Magistrate Judges Gabriel Gorenstein and Theodore Katz were assigned to the Bernard Madoff case. He is a member of the American Bar Association, the New York State Bar Association, the Federal Magistrate Judges Association, the Metropolitan Black Bar Association, and the Federal Bar Council.

Dikgang Moseneke

Dikgang Moseneke currently serves as the Deputy Chief-Justice of South Africa. At the age of 15 he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on Robben Island after he was arrested, detained, and convicted of participating in anti-apartheid human rights activity. On Robben Island, he established a very close relationship with Nelson Mandela and other prominent leaders of South Africa. While Justice Moseneke was jailed on Robben Island, he obtained a B.A. in English and Political Science, as well as a B.Iuris degree. He later completed an LL.B. degree. All three degrees were conferred by the University of South Africa, a provider of distance education. He served with distinction as an attorney and barrister. In 1993, Justice Moseneke served on the technical committee that drafted the interim constitution of South Africa. In 1994, Nelson Mandela appointed him as Deputy Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission, which conducted the first democratic elections in South Africa. Before his appointment as Justice of the Constitutional Court in November 2001, Justice Moseneke was appointed a Judge of the High Court in Pretoria. In 2002, he was appointed as judge in the Constitutional Court, and, in 2005, he was appointed Deputy Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa.
Justice Moseneke is a founding member of the Black Lawyers' Association and of the National Association of Democratic Lawyers of South Africa. He has served in several community and non-governmental organizations, including as chairperson of Project Literacy for more than 10 years, trustee of Sowetan Nation Building, and deputy chairperson of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund. Justice Moseneke is the first chancellor of the recently established Pretoria Technikon and currently serves as chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand. He has been awarded three honorary doctorates at universities in South Africa and is a recipient of numerous awards, including the KWV Award of Excellence, the Black Lawyers Association Excellence Award, the Unisa School of Business Leadership Excellence Award, the Black Management Forum Empowerment Award, the International Trial Lawyer of the Year Award from the International Academy of Trial Lawyers, the Soweto Achiever Award, and honorary professorships from Unisa in Banking Law and Mercantile Law.

In the past 20 years, Justice Moseneke has read numerous papers at law and business conferences, and has published several academic papers in law journals in South Africa and abroad.

Radhika Coomaraswamy

Radhika Coomaraswamy was appointed by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan as Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in April 2006 and was reappointed by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in February 2007. In this capacity, she serves as a moral voice and independent advocate to build awareness and give prominence to the rights and protection of boys and girls affected by armed conflict.

Ms. Coomaraswamy, a lawyer by training and formerly the Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission, is an internationally known human rights advocate who has done outstanding work as Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (1994-2003). In her reports to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, she has written on violence in the family, violence in the community, violence against women during armed conflict, and the problem of international trafficking. A strong advocate of women’s rights, she has intervened on behalf of countless women throughout the world seeking clarification from governments in cases involving violence against women.

Ms. Coomaraswamy was appointed Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission in May 2003. She was also a director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Sri Lanka, leading research projects in the field of ethnicity, women, and human rights. She has served as a member of the Global Faculty of the New York University School of Law. She has published widely, including two books on constitutional law and numerous articles on ethnic studies and the status of women.
Ms. Coomaraswamy is a graduate of the United Nations International School in New York. She received her B.A. from Yale University, her J.D. from Columbia University, an LL.M from Harvard University and honorary Ph.Ds from Amherst College, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Essex, the University of Leuven, and the University of Ulster.

Ms. Coomaraswamy has won many awards, including the International Law Award of the American Bar Association, the Human Rights Award of the International Human Rights Law Group, the Bruno Kreisky Award of 2000, the Leo Ettinger Human Rights Prize of the University of Oslo, the Cesar Romero Award of the University of Dayton, the William J. Butler Award from the University of Cincinnati, and the Robert S. Litvack Award from McGill University.