



FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE AND INTEGRITY IN THE PRACTICE OF CRIMINAL LAW

NEWS & PRESS: LEGAL COMMUNITY

Farewell, my friend Roy Black

Wednesday, July 23, 2025

FACDL mourns the loss of one of our most esteemed members, Roy Black, who passed away yesterday in Coral Gables. FACDL extends our condolences to Roy's family, and there is no better way to honor the legacy of this legal lion than with the words of his partner, Jackie Perczek, whose remembrance of Roy is an inspiration to all those in the legal community:



Farewell my friend, Roy Black

This week we lost Roy Black, one of the greatest criminal defense attorneys in American legal history. Many of us lost a dear friend, a mentor, and a teacher. He was a noble and humble man who had an extraordinary career, defined by passion and deep purpose. As he liked to say, "I am a student and a lover of

the human experience.” For him, understanding and connecting with people—truly seeing them—was one of his life’s most meaningful pursuits.

When Roy was a schoolboy, his family moved from Connecticut to Jamaica, where he was enrolled in an English prep school. Roy had a math teacher who hated him—either because Roy was white or because Roy was American, the teacher took great pleasure in humiliating Roy. The teacher would call Roy to the blackboard and ask questions Roy could not answer, using shame to control and abuse Roy. Those were painful, formative years. But from that abuse, Roy learned to hate petty authority. He lived the pain of how cruel and corrosive bias and prejudice are, and it lit a fire in him—a lifelong resolve to stand with people who are mistreated, abused by authority, oppressed, dismissed, or overlooked.

That is why Roy became a public defender. Not just to be a lawyer, but to fight for those who have no voice, who are pushed around, who are mistreated when they have no one to fight for them. Roy never forgot what it felt like to be made to feel small and ashamed. And he fought in the courtroom with confidence and purpose, never cowering to the oppression of the government or the power of the courts. As Roy said when he gave the 2019 commencement address at the University of Miami Law School:

“I urge you not to fear the displeasure of the crowd or the criticism of the trolls. Our Constitution and laws are toothless if they only protect those who are popular. Don’t be a bystander. Stand up for the rights of others. Stand up against the inhumane treatment of this dark era, against oppression and racism. It has always been the lawyers who have stood for America’s highest ideals. History will long remember the cowardice of those who enable and make excuses but will also remember the courage of those who spoke out and resisted.”

Roy led his life outside the courtroom with love and compassion for everyone. For every lethal cross-examination, every overwhelming closing argument, every accolade and every award for being the toughest adversary in the courtroom, Roy was the humblest and most noble man in his daily life. He was a friend to all, his door always open, and he was only a phone call away for anyone who needed guidance, had a question, or wanted to run an idea by him. No one who asked Roy a question or shared an idea ever felt small or ashamed.

It’s hard to measure a life as full and meaningful as Roy’s, but in his own words, Roy gave us the measure that mattered most: “How we improve the lives of others tells us the success and significance of our own lives ... As lawyers, we are responsible for the trajectory of hundreds of people’s lives. So

50 years from today, when you are called upon to reflect back on your life, will you be able to say, 'I fought for what was right, I fought to protect what was important, I used my skills to help people who came to me in the most desperate times of their lives?'"

That was Roy. That is how he measured the success of his life, and that will be his legacy.

I was just a kid, a year out of law school, when Roy gave me the opportunity of a lifetime— to join him at the law firm in the fight for life and freedom. And for the last 30 years, it has been magical. Roy was not only my law partner, he was also my teacher and my friend. I loved him dearly. He once said that every time we see injustice in the legal system, that is a lesson for us to love and fight for justice even more. When we see pain and humiliation, let your heart be awakened to mercy. Although it feels like a fairytale has come to an end, in the end we are all a story. Roy's story—his love for life and for freedom—will live on in all of us, and in all the people whose lives he transformed.

Roy loved poetry, and he once read to me some of the words to "The Last Goodbye," from Lord of the Rings:

"I saw the light fade from the sky
On the wind I heard a sigh
As the snowflakes cover
My fallen brothers
I will say this last goodbye"
"Though the road goes ever on
Out from this place, I must go
And leave you now behind
But this path that we once walked together
Will remain with me forever"
"And though where the road then takes me,
I cannot tell
We came all this way
But now comes the day
To bid you farewell
Many places I have been
Many sorrows I have seen
But I don't regret
Nor will I forget
All who took that road with me"

"I bid you all a very fond farewell."

Farewell, Roy. With deep gratitude for the road you walked with all of us—your law partners and everyone at Black Srebnick, your colleagues, your clients, your hundreds of students, your family, and your friends. For the laughter, the strength, and the moments that defined the path we walked and the memories that will remain with all of us, always.

This generation and many to come stand on your shoulders.

~ Jackie Perczek