

# PR 5

Office of the President  
June 16, 2023

Members, Board of Trustees:

## HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENT

Recommendation: that the Board of Trustees approve awarding an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters to John Rosenberg, as approved and recommended by the University Faculty.

Background: Pursuant to the Conditions of Merit for Honorary Degrees, the University Joint Committee on Honorary Degrees recommended to the elected Faculty Senators that the specified honorary degree be awarded to John Rosenberg. The elected Faculty Senators have approved the recommendation.

Biographical sketch of the recipient is attached.

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Action taken:  Approved     Disapproved     Other \_\_\_\_\_

## **John Rosenberg**

John Rosenberg (born 1931) is a Holocaust survivor, longtime civil and human rights activist, a former attorney in the Civil Rights Division and founder of the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund in Prestonsburg, Kentucky.

Rosenberg was born in Magdeburg, Germany in 1931. On November 9, 1938, seven-year-old Rosenberg and his parents were pulled from their home by Nazis and stood in the courtyard of the adjacent synagogue, where they were forced to watch the holy scriptures burned and the building blown up. For a year afterward, Rosenberg stayed with his family in an internment camp in Rotterdam, Holland before leaving for America in February 1940 and eventually moved to South Carolina.

Rosenberg attended Duke University and was the first in his family to attend college. While there, he joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program and upon graduation served two years in the Air Force. After the Air Force, Rosenberg studied law at the University of North Carolina and graduated at the height of the civil rights movement, whereupon he went to work at the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. He served there from 1962 to 1970 and made his mark as a litigator of racial discrimination cases, particularly in the South.

Rosenberg was contemplating a move from the Department of Justice and learned of a fledgling organization that was slated to defend civil rights in Appalachia, the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund of Kentucky, also known as AppalReD Legal Aid. While working for the Department of Justice, he met his wife, who has worked side by side with him for all these years, and together they traveled to Eastern Kentucky, a trip that transformed their lives.

John would direct AppalReD and oversee its expansion and efforts for twenty-eight years from its founding in 1970. As director, he trained many UK law students, who worked as interns and clerks for the organization and then went on to become outstanding lawyers, and even judges, in the intricacies of helping people to deal legally with housing, educational problems, public assistance, termination of parental rights, and environmental disasters.

Rosenberg retired from AppalReD in 2001 but remains highly active in his community. He presently is Vice Chair of the Kentucky Public Advocacy Commission and was a past member of the Board of Governors of the Kentucky Bar Association, where he has chaired the Donated Legal Services Committee, the Education Law Section, and the Public Interest Law Section. He has also served on the Board of Regents of Morehead State University and the Visiting Committee of the University of Kentucky. His activities since 1970 and his work in the state's legal system, have touched and improved the lives of thousands of Kentuckians.

John Rosenberg is recommended for an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Kentucky.