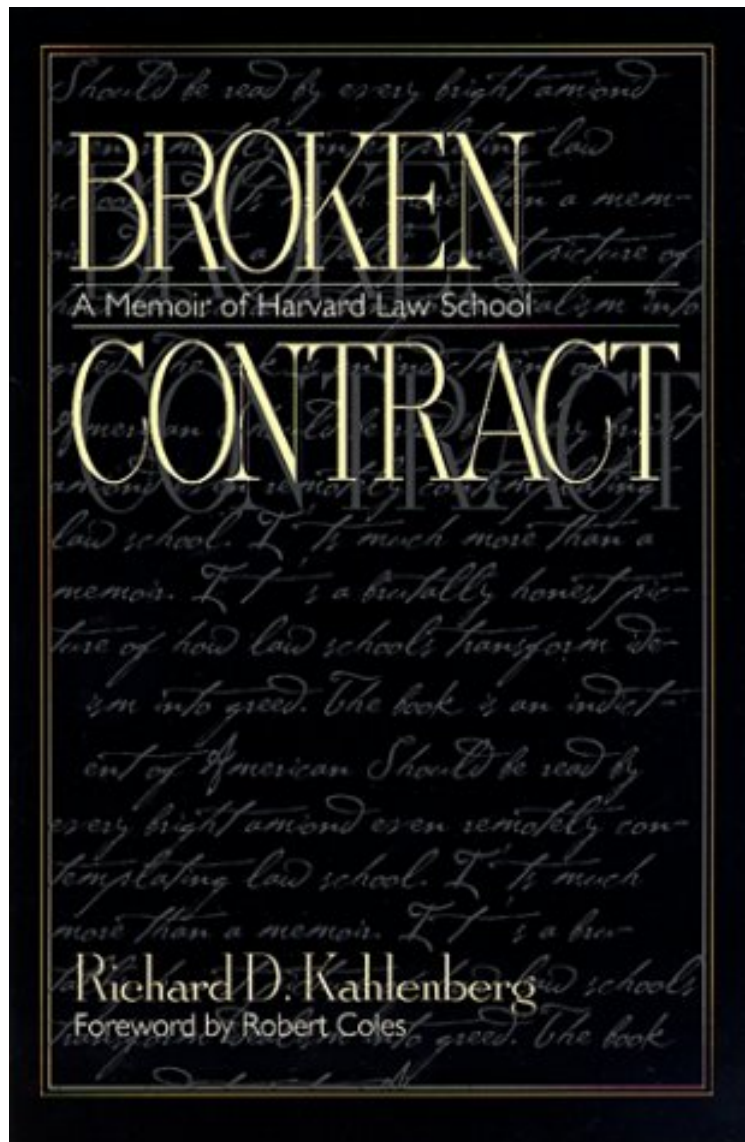


[Read free] Broken Contract: A Memoir of Harvard Law School

## Broken Contract: A Memoir of Harvard Law School

Richard D. Kahlenberg

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**Richard D. Kahlenberg : Broken Contract: A Memoir of Harvard Law School** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Broken Contract: A Memoir of Harvard Law School:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy robynBook is in good condition.12 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Inspiring and thought-provoking!By A. BurtonBroken Contract is the chronicle of Richard Kahlenberg's struggle to justify his classical liberal ideals with the harsh reality of law school: most entering law students have a desire to use the privilege of an education in the law to help the poor and downtrodden of society,

"but upon graduating, the vast majority [scramble] to fill the ranks of the nation's top corporate law firms" (from the front flap). Through the framework of his struggle with these powerful opposing forces, Kahlenberg presents us with a fascinating look at Harvard Law School, its culture and the nature of the law education of the late 1980s. He paints a portrait of everyday life as a law student, scrambling for Law Review positions, summer internships, judicial clerkships and ultimately, for a job after graduation. As Kahlenberg searches for a job and dogmatically asks each interviewer about the firm's pro bono work (he is interested in little more), he occasionally comes across as an elitist; his sense of noblesse oblige is mildly nauseating. Throughout the book, Kahlenberg operates on the assumption that class-action lawsuits are morally right, that cases brought by poor people are just, that all big corporations are evil, that people have to sell-out to earn big salaries and that "conservatives" are willing to do anything to guarantee the rights of the rich. However, don't let these relatively small negative aspects of the book deter you from reading it, even if you identify yourself as a conservative. His larger point is this: "since each of us struggles daily with good and bad impulses, we might want to restructure our social institutions in order to make it a little easier to do good" (235). This book does not target a certain ideology, except perhaps greed. Kahlenberg does not pull any punches and the targets of his criticisms span the ideological spectrum (although he does let a few more land on the right side of the spectrum). Broken Contract rates a full four and a half stars. Broken Contract challenged me to think critically about my motivations for attending law school and broadened my perspective on life in general and on the legal community in particular. 6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Would You Like Some Cheese to go with that Whine? By Priscilla von Trappen First, let me list the good characteristics of the book. The author is intelligent, so it's not extremely tedious. The author's writing style is also very engaging, and he doesn't go into detail about all his term papers. It provides a new perspective on law school and the law in general. That's about all I can say for it. Now, for what I disliked. The author is a liberal and is constantly comparing things to a liberal standpoint and trying to get you to see why conservatives are like the Wicked Witch of the West. He is extraordinarily bitter when Bush beats Dukakis. I'm not stating my political association, I'm just saying that it's annoying. This is not objective journalism at all (the author has a journalism degree). Second, this guy is a whiner. He gets into the best law school in the country, and whines when he gets a B+. He resents his roommate for making Law Review while the author did not. He can tell from the first semester that law doesn't interest him, that public policy does, but for some reason unbeknownst to the readers he obstinately stays at Harvard instead of transferring to, say, the Kennedy School, where his wife is studying public policy. He does not spare any of his professors from harsh criticism, even the two or three he claims to like. He seems to be upset that almost everyone in his class decides to go to a corporate firm rather than public interest, but he himself comes within a day of taking a job at one of those same corporate firms. He also whines about how hard it is to find a place to work and decide where to go (he got offers from most of D.C.'s top law firms). Finally, he blames his law professors for his cynicism, yet it is evident from the first chapter that the author is a cynic. As he was writing this during law school, I don't think his professors can be given all the credit. I would only recommend reading this book if A) you are stuck on a deserted island with nothing else to do. B) you want to tell yourself how miserable you would have been there anyway after you don't get accepted at Harvard or C) to make yourself thankful your spouse/children don't whine as much as this guy and that you're not a lawyer.

In 1986, 70 percent of the first-year class of Harvard Law School wanted to pursue careers in public-interest law. Ten years later, the same percentage of this class was pursuing careers in private corporate firms. How is it that these students began their careers interested in using law as a vehicle for social change, but ended up in those very law firms most resistant to change? How are law students able to reconcile liberal politics with careers in corporate law? Richard D. Kahlenberg's *Broken Contract* serves to warn prospective law students on the transformation that happens during the second and third years. His memoir explores the intense competitiveness and insidious pressure leading to jobs that are lucrative, prestigious, and challenging but ultimately unsatisfying. Though *Broken Contract* doesn't seek to convince every law student to go into public service, Kahlenberg means to challenge and restructure our social institutions to make it easier to follow our impulses toward good instead of toward the goods.

From *Library Journal* "How is it that so many students can enter law school determined to promote liberal ideals and leave three years later to counsel the least socially progressive elements of our society?" Kahlenberg focuses on this remarkable transformation in his memoir of his Harvard Law School (HLS) education, chronicling his successful resistance to the pressure to practice corporate law over public-interest law. He describes the debate within the HLS faculty over the Critical Legal Studies movement, essentially a struggle between radical and conservative theorists. But this is also Kahlenberg's own personal story, providing the same inside look at HLS that Scott Turow does in *One L* (Farrar, 1988, rev. ed.)--the anxieties and boredom of class, the peculiarities of professors, and the fixation on grades. Unlike Turow, whose narrative ends with the first year of law school, Kahlenberg writes of his experiences from matriculation to commencement. A required purchase for any library holding *One L*. - Elizabeth Fielder Olson, Archer Greiner, Haddonfield, N.J. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Kahlenberg's brilliant and brilliantly written memoir of his years as a student at the Harvard Law School is the most compelling critique of legal education

of this generation. Lively and devastating, *Broken Contract* is a must, not only for those who are already lawyers, but, more important, also for those who want to be lawyers. This book could change their lives."Martin Paretz"Should be read by every bright mind even remotely contemplating law school. It's much more than a memoir. It's a brutally honest picture of how law schools transform idealism into greed. The book is an indictment of American legal education. Perhaps if it's read and passed around, the current stampede toward law will be halted."John Grisham"In *One L*, Scott Turow wrote of Socratic cruelty at Harvard Law School. But that was just part of the story. Richard Kahlenberg's *Broken Contract* reveals an even more insidious and costly process: how law school can transmute idealism into avarice. Kahlenberg's writing seethes with the outrage of a man who feels jilted by the school he wanted to love. He cites incident after incident to show how students' natural public-spiritedness is turned into self-interest, cloaked in a grey flannel suit, and delivered almost exclusively to the service of the powerful. *Broken Contract* should be required reading for every college student considering law school."Senator Charles S. Robb"Kahlenberg's recollection . . . is an instructive mix of reportage, commentary, and self-examination, all of it bound together by the dramatic tension of whether or not the author's first-day idealism would survive second- and third-year law school realism."Washington Post Book World"*Broken Contract* is a forceful cri de coeur."Los Angeles Times"Richly anecdotal, forceful and smart. . . . A lively, provocative book."Legal Times

About the Author Richard D. Kahlenberg is a fellow at the Century Foundation, where he writes about education, equal opportunity, and civil rights. His most recent book is *The Remedy: Class, Race, and Affirmative Action*.