

May 17, 2023

To: The John Jay College Community
Re: John Jay's 2023 Honorary Degree Recipients

I am proud to share our 2023 honorary degree recipients and fierce advocates for justice—Mariska Hargitay and Eric Holder, Jr.

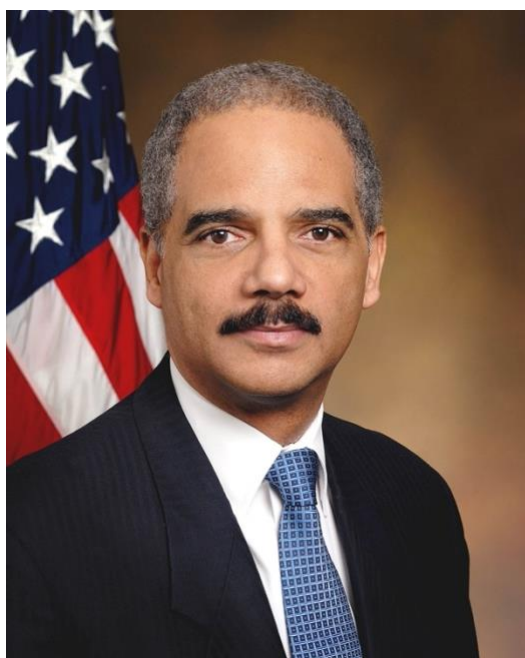


Mariska Hargitay, an actress, activist, and advocate, has dedicated her time, talent, and resources to helping survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse.

Hargitay was awakened to the weight that survivors carry through her role as Detective Olivia Benson on *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. Motivated to help, she founded the [Joyful Heart Foundation](#), which seeks to transform how our society responds to sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. Joyful Heart not only helps survivors heal but also fights to improve their access to justice. Hargitay also became a certified rape counselor, produced *I Am Evidence*, a documentary about the thousands of untested rape kits across the U.S., and campaigned for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

Award from the New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault. She has also been honored with an Emmy for Outstanding Actress in a Drama, seven additional Emmy nominations, a 2004 Golden Globe Award, a Gracie Allen Award for American Women in Radio, and Television and five SAG Award nominations.

Hargitay's advocacy has been recognized with a Good Sister Award for Advocacy by the Children's Advocacy Center of Manhattan, an Empowerment Award from Peace Over Violence, and a Special Ally



Eric Holder, Jr., the first African American U.S. Attorney General, is an advocate for civil rights and criminal justice reform and an activist for voting rights and gerrymandering reform. Raised in Queens, New York, Holder attended Stuyvesant High School and earned a B.A. and J.D. from Columbia University.

Holder began his career in public service in the Public Integrity Section of the Department of Justice. He was later appointed to the Superior Court of the District of Columbia by President Ronald Reagan, as U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia and Deputy Attorney General (the first African American to hold the position) by President Bill Clinton, and as U.S. Attorney General by President Barack Obama. His criminal justice reform efforts include working to end mass incarceration; reducing obstacles facing people impacted by the criminal legal system; supporting community-oriented policing; and de-emphasizing mandatory minimum sentencing for low-level, non-violent drug offenses. Holder's advocacy against voter disenfranchisement includes filing lawsuits to limit partisan gerrymandering, fighting to protect vote by mail, educating young people on the importance of voting, and expanding voter education.

Holder received honorary doctor of law degrees from Columbia University and Boston University, and a Living Legend award from the National Urban League. He was also named one of the 50 Most Influential Minority Lawyers in America by the *National Law Journal*, a Greatest Washington Lawyer of the Last 30 Years by the *Legal Times*, and among the 100 Most Influential People by *Time Magazine*. Holder is a member of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

I am thrilled for members of our Class of 2023 and that Mariska Hargitay and Eric Holder are joining our community of scholars. I hope to see you all at John Jay's 56th Commencement ceremony!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karol V. Mason". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'M'.

Karol V. Mason

President

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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