

WINTER 2021, Vol. 35, Issue 1

# COUNTERBALANCE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES

*In Memoriam*  
**Joan Dempsey Klein**  
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## Advancing Justice Like Never Before



**MISSION**

NAWJ's mission is to promote the judicial role of protecting the rights of individuals under the rule of law through strong, committed, diverse judicial leadership; fairness and equality in the courts; and equal access to justice.

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**COUNTERBALANCE is published by:  
National Association of Women Judges**

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
of  
WOMEN JUDGES

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Cover background photo by Clint McKoy



# President's Message



**B**orn July 22, 1920, about a month before women were granted the right to vote, Vaino Spencer grew up during the Great Depression and was a real estate broker before she began a legal career. As a teenager, she appeared as a dancer in a Laurel and Hardy movie, *Bonnie Scotland* (1935), along with her father, Abdul Hassan.

Born August 18, 1924, Joan Dempsey Klein, a fifth-generation Californian, earned a bachelor's degree from San Diego State, where she swam and played volleyball. After graduating, she joined the touring aquatic performance show, *Buster Crabbe's Aqua-Parade*, and was part of a synchronized swimming troupe that toured Europe in 1950.

In addition to apparently sharing a background in performing, the two founders of the National Association of Women Judges, shared remarkable professional careers. Justice Spencer was a practicing attorney for nine years before beginning her 46 year judicial career. She was the third black woman in California to pass the State Bar exam and the third to open a law practice in Los Angeles. In 1961, she became California's first black woman judge, and the third in the nation, when she was appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court.

Justice Klein was a Deputy Attorney General for eight years before beginning her 50 year judicial career. In 1963, Justice Klein was appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court, where she soon became presiding judge. She served on the Los Angeles Superior Court from 1975-1978 and was appointed as Presiding Justice of the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate Division, Division 3 in 1978.

Justice Spencer served on the Los Angeles Municipal Court bench until 1976, when she was appointed to the Superior Court. In 1980, she was appointed as Presiding Justice of Division One of the Second Appellate District Court of Appeal, making her the first black woman to sit on a California appellate court.

These two pioneers spent years mentoring others

and working together to advance civil rights and women's rights. Neither wanted to be the only woman to achieve the many accomplishments that they both did. They founded NAWJ to help promote women candidates on the bench and to address the gender bias and discrimination that women judges experienced. Due to their passion, vision and advocacy, the face of the judiciary has changed. I am inspired by all that they accomplished and am grateful to stand on their shoulders.

Yet, as recent events have shown, the judiciary continues to face challenges. Women and people of color have not been appointed to federal judicial positions with enough frequency in the past few years. Women comprise a slight majority of the overall population of the United States, yet there are still parts of the country where there are few, or no, women or people of color on the bench. Disparate sentencings and unequal treatment of people of color in the justice system persist. The pandemic has further highlighted inequities in access to court and the decline in civility in public discourse is eroding confidence in the judiciary.

It is clear that NAWJ is still as relevant today as it was in 1979. Who better than NAWJ, the leading voice of women in the judiciary, to continue to advocate for change on issues demanding our attention? Fortunately, our members follow the lead of our two extraordinary co-founders. Our members and committees work tirelessly to promote the ideals of our mission statement and to ensure a future which is more just and more fair than our present. I am so grateful to be a part of this truly remarkable organization and know that the best way to honor Justice Spencer and Justice Klein (who both died at the age of 96) is continue the work they cared so passionately about.

Due to the ongoing public safety and health concerns caused by COVID-19, our midyear meeting will be virtual this year. Please save the date for the kick-off reception on the evening of April 15th, which will be followed by two

“It is clear that NAWJ is still as relevant today as it was in 1979. Who better than NAWJ, the leading voice of women in the judiciary, to continue to advocate for change on issues demanding our attention?”

educational sessions on the morning of April 16th. Sessions addressing racial justice and our mental health and well-being are in the final planning stages. The board and committee chairs will meet following the morning sessions. More details will be posted on the website soon.

When the vaccines have been dispensed and we are able to safely travel, we will meet in Nashville. I am looking forward to a tremendous celebration as

we gather to learn from one another, comfortably express our concerns on issues affecting our judicial responsibilities and share treasured collegiality.

Warmest regards,



**Hon. Karen Matson Donohue**  
President

## Vice President of Publications Message



“The articles presented here provide new insights into some of the most challenging aspects of our rapidly-evolving conditions.”

**T**hank you to all who submitted articles for this issue of Counterbalance. We are particularly appreciative at this time where the world feels upside down amidst the challenges presented by the pandemic. Yet, in spite of it all, the leaders at NAWJ haven't skipped a beat, and especially so with the release of our latest issue of Counterbalance.

This issue's message is in keeping with Judge Donohue's theme: Advancing Justice Like Never Before. And to put that theme into context, it is befitting that we begin by honoring the life of Judge Joan Dempsey Klein, our organization's founding mother and a national leader who died in December 2020 at the age of 96. Judge Dempsey Klein devoted her career to creating a space welcoming to women in the legal profession, and quite literally advancing justice like never before. Judge Judith McConnell's tribute is both moving and engaging.

The articles presented here provide new insights into some of the most challenging aspects of our rapidly-evolving conditions. Over the past year, as we've seen capital changes in the way we conduct hearings and observed how long-standing practices have evolved to meet our new reality, often these changes have been embraced by our members with competence and grace at courts around the country. Yet, as our two articles on life at the Immigration Courts during the pandemic recount, not all progress has been even, and there is still much more to do to advance justice amidst the pandemic.

From Judge Ann Breen-Greco's article entitled

“Women Under Attack” which highlights initiatives being taken to address the targeting of women in leadership roles and the security measures being considered in response, to Judge Bev Cutler's article on life after the bench and her work supporting the American Immigration Lawyers Military Assistance Program, it's clear that NAWJ judges are engaging on some of the most difficult justice issues facing our community. Yet, despite all of the challenges presented by the pandemic, it's also clear that the work of NAWJ leaders continues to extend far beyond our borders as is evidenced by Judge Tamila Ipema's work leading ten female judges to present at the Social Justice Summit Across the Americas at the request of Pope Francis and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences at the Vatican.

It is my distinct honor to edit this Counterbalance issue, and to keep you informed and connected across our districts and across the country. It is a joint effort, and impossible to achieve without the steady leadership of Laurie Denham, NAWJ's Interim Executive Director, and her skilled team including Janelle Mihoc. I encourage each of our members to share activities, scholarly articles, and ideas with us so that NAWJ's Counterbalance issues will continue to inspire and help our organization maintain its high standards of publication excellence.

**Hon. Mimi Tsankov**  
National Association of Immigration Judges capacity  
Vice President of Publications

*Comments made do not represent the position of the U.S. Department of Justice; they represent the personal views of the author.*



# Interim Executive Director Message

**A New Year—A New Beginning.** 2020 was tumultuous for NAWJ and for everyone, yet you stepped up your commitment of time, of resources, or both. We raised almost 200% more internally than in 2019, showing our external funders that we are as committed as they are. We transitioned from courtrooms and offices to dining rooms and living rooms. Many districts held holiday Zoom parties to celebrate, offering opportunities to interact and engage one another in ways that had not been tried before. You met all these challenges with flying colors.

Drawing on this experience, we are planning in the new year to continue offering many of our programs virtually. After successfully completing our State Justice Institute

COVID-19 grant through webinars and podcasts, we begin a new grant this year to develop curriculum and provide training on gaining awareness of implicit bias. We also are exploring opportunities in the areas of racial equality, immigration and the courts, the impact of COVID-19 on the criminal jury trial, and women in prison. Several districts also are offering Color of Justice this quarter. Through such use of technology, NAWJ is gaining ability to make an even larger impact in our communities.

Learning about those we serve and understanding their demographics will help NAWJ to better tell our story, increase awareness, broaden our outreach, and expand our membership. Our members and leaders exemplify our mission to promote

the judicial role of protecting the rights of individuals under the rule of law through strong, committed, diverse judicial leadership, fairness and equality in the courts, and equal access to justice.

If you have new colleagues in your courts, invite them into the NAWJ community. I look forward to “seeing” you at the virtual Midyear Conference on Friday, April 16 and the Thursday evening opening reception on April 15.



**Laurie Hein Denham, CAE**  
Interim Executive Director

## Presiding Justice Joan Dempsey Klein *In Memoriam*

*In Christmas Eve, 2020 we lost our co-founding mother and powerhouse leader Joan Dempsey Klein. She died in her sleep at the age of 96.*

*With Presiding Justice Vaino Spencer, Joan co-founded NAWJ in 1979, bringing together judges from all over the country. But Joan had long been a force in fighting for the improvement of the status of women in the law. She knew that by organizing feminist attorneys, our power could be amplified and she undertook the task throughout the nation. She co-founded the California Women Lawyers in 1974 to promote changes in the law and the profession and served as its first president. She went to Tennessee to assist Judge Martha Craig Daughtry in founding the first women's bar association in Tennessee and traveled to San Diego to help found the feminist Lawyers Club. Joan knew that by working together we could achieve our goal to make our courts and legal system work more fairly for both men and women.*

*In 1979, Justices Klein and Spencer organized the development of a list of women judges nationwide, starting with work already done by Professor Beverly Blair Cook of the University of Wisconsin. An early challenge was to define “women judge” and the decision was made to include judicial positions that required a law degree. Invitations went out and more than 100 judges gathered in Los Angeles for the founding meeting. Justice Klein was our first president and Justice Spencer the second.*

*Justice Klein was tireless in her support of the advancement of women in the legal profession. She never rested on her laurels and always encouraged and supported younger judges and lawyers. She was outspoken and opinionated but always invited robust debate. When Sandra Day O'Connor was nominated to the Supreme Court, Joan appeared and addressed the United State Senate in support of the nomination. She received numerous awards during her lifetime and retired at the age of 90 when her term of*

*office was ending. She said she didn't feel comfortable asking the voters for another 12 year term on the court.*

*Most people don't know that Joan was a professional synchronized swim team member and toured Europe with Buster Crabbe's Aqua-Parade. She left the team to return to Los Angeles where she decided to go to law school rather than become a teacher. After seven years as a California deputy attorney general, she was appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court where she became presiding judge. You can still see Judge Joan Klein on YouTube in the show “What's my Line?”*

*Joan, we will miss seeing you power walking in your sweats wearing a mink coat, we will miss your bold leadership, and we will miss most of all miss your tireless support and friendship.*

**Judith McConnell**  
Founding member and past president, NAWJ



# Contributing Beyond the Courtroom

*“Life’s most persistent and  
urgent question is, what are  
you doing for others.”*

*– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*



By Hon. Tamila E. Ipema  
Judge, San Diego County Superior Court

As judges, we serve our communities each day by giving our all to decide properly the cases that come before us. Busy as we are with life, family, and work, we are also fortunate to have opportunities to contribute beyond our courtroom. Just hearing what my fellow judges have been up to recently inspires me to consider my interests and how I might be able to help.

I am fascinated by how legal systems can improve equal access to justice for all, especially the most vulnerable members of our society. When I served as President of the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ) (2018-2019) I chose “Global Judicial Leadership” as our theme for the year. As one highlight, we explored leadership roles in a conference on the “Rights of All Women” that we presented in collaboration with the United Nations and Columbia University.

In June 2019, at the invitation of Pope Francis and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences at the Vatican, I had the great honor of leading a delegation of ten female judges, to present at the “Social Justice Summit Across the Americas.” We exchanged ideas with fifty other judges from Pan-American countries on providing equal access to justice, particularly for the indigenous and vulnerable populations of our respective countries.

A personal highlight of the summit for many of us was the moment when Pope Francis walked into the room and greeted us individually. I had the honor of sitting next to the Pope as he delivered a passionate speech on social justice. He spoke of poor, disadvantaged, and vulnerable populations lacking full access to justice, and encouraged us as judges to keep working to find solutions.

At the conclusion of the summit, the Vatican Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences announced the formation of a standing committee of “The Pan-American Commission





(top) Pope Francis meeting Judge Ipema 2019 at the Social Rights Summit at the Vatican

(bottom) Judge Ipema leading the delegation of ten U.S. Judges to the Vatican, at the invitation of Pope Francis, to present at the Social Rights Summit at the Vatican Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

of Judges on Social Justice and Franciscan Doctrine.” I was honored when Pope Francis appointed me as one of seven judges to lead this commission in the Americas. The Chief Supreme Court Justice of Peru, and judges from Chile, Colombia, Argentina, and Brazil are all members on the board of this commission. The mission of the Commission is to seek ways to train and educate Pan-American judges and attorneys on issues of social justice.

As the members of the Commission, we communicate almost daily through WhatsApp. In 2019, we conducted in-person educational conferences in Peru, Brazil, and Rome on social justice issues. Unfortunately, our three planned in-person conferences for 2020 in

Colombia, Argentina, and Rome were postponed due to the pandemic. But we have organized successful virtual conferences instead. Our international virtual conference ending in December of 2020 was entitled “Building a New Social Justice,” and included sixteen judges from multiple Pan-American countries speaking on eight different panels regarding new issues of social justice and the environment resulting from the pandemic. The conference was attended virtually by more than 2500 persons, and has stimulated further discussion and action on the issues presented.

The 2019 conference in Peru was held in Pucallpa, a small town on the Amazon river. More than two hundred leaders of various indigenous tribes, judges and attorneys were in attendance. I presented a talk on collaborative court models focusing on treatment and training instead of punishment.

On this trip, our commission members met and addressed the members of the Supreme Court of Peru in Lima. To our excitement we were then invited by the Chief Supreme Court Justice of Peru to accompany her and the Chief Indigenous Judge of the Amazon region on a journey to the remote village of Masisea to witness the inauguration of the village’s very first court of justice – a small two-room courthouse with one judge and one attorney mediator from the same village. The journey took almost two harrowing hours in a small craft up the dangerous Amazon river. Upon arrival we learned that a boat with eight residents from the village had capsized on the river that very day. There were no survivors. The news both broke our hearts and impressed upon us in an unforgettable way the importance of access to justice. The opening of their own court of justice, which we were privileged to attend, meant that the residents of this village would not have to navigate the treacherous waters to

make it to a court of law in a distant town to have their grievances heard.

As judges we have much to give, and we never stop learning ourselves. We also know that just one step leads to another. As Saint Francis of Assisi said, “Start by doing what is necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”



Members of the Pan-American Commission of Judges on Social Rights posing with the Chief Indigenous Judge in front of the first court of law in the village of Masisea in Peru.

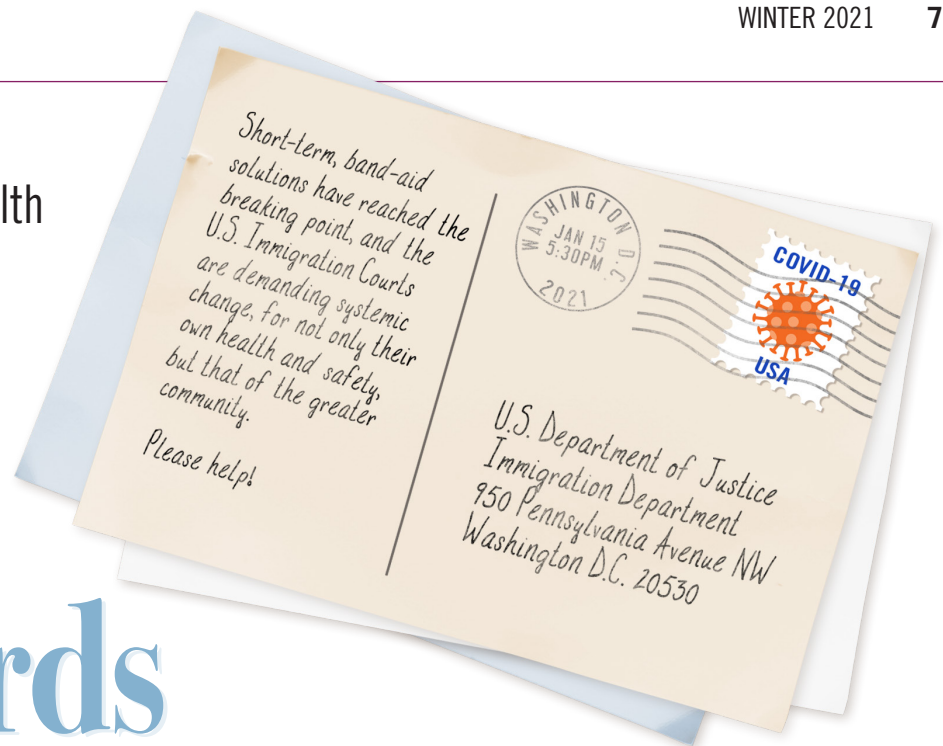


A leader of an indigenous population and his family who had travelled 500 Km to attend the conference on social rights of the indigenous population in Pucallpa, Peru



Tamila Ipema with the Members of the Pan-American Commission of Judges on Social Justice presenting at a conference in Pucallpa, Peru on Social Rights of the Indigenous populations

Needing to meet the health and safety needs of the communities they serve.



# “Postcards from the Pandemic” Part 2

## The U.S. Immigration Courts: Still in a Health

For the past five months, the U.S. Immigration Courts have been engaged in a dangerous ritual with courts opening and then closing in rapid succession as COVID cases materialize and then recede. This process is ad hoc and non-transparent causing considerable concern throughout the Immigration Judge corps and the greater legal community. Contact tracing is not standardized, and cleaning



By Hon. Mimi Tsankov

National Association of Immigration Judges capacity  
Vice President of Publications, NAWJ

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measures are opaque. These limitations are wreaking havoc on the health and safety of those who preside over hearings, as well

as that of the stakeholders that interface with more than 69 courts around the U.S. This flawed approach is a direct result of a failure on the part of the U.S. government to take responsibility for the effects that flow from holding hearings during a pandemic. One would think

**“As a result of this structure, the Immigration Judges lack the authority to ensure a safe and healthy work environment, and must rely on DOJ leadership to control every aspect of the health and safety process.”**

that a judge has the power to ensure a healthy and safe environment in which to hold hearings. Not so in the United States where the U.S. Federal Government houses its Immigration Courts within the Executive Branch’s U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), which is the top Federal law enforcement entity in the country. As a result of this structure, the Immigration Judges lack the authority to ensure a safe and healthy work environment, and must rely on DOJ leadership to control every aspect of the health and safety process. As a result, this flawed construct has resulted in Immigration Judges denied access to adequate personal protective equipment, scrambling for information about whether courthouse airflow is properly sanitized, and desperate for technology that would enable remote judicial access to hearings. Many Immigration Judges find themselves forced to preside even in cities that are



being devastated by COVID, or face removal from their position. This is so troubling that members of the U.S. Congress' Senate Judiciary Committee have asked the General Accounting Office to conduct an investigation into allegations of mismanagement at the Courts during this unprecedented period. While this is an important step, the process is lengthy and the short-term damage palpable. Lacking the independent judicial authority to address the pandemic's emergent concerns, many Immigration Judges find themselves not only powerless but actively stymied because of the structural flaw which is exacerbating the challenges that the coronavirus pandemic presents.

In early March, witnessing the relentless spread of COVID in China, Italy, and

Now, five months into the pandemic, the Department of Justice leadership has repeatedly proven itself to be tone-deaf to the demands of this pandemic. Instead of closing down Immigration Courts due to safety concerns, and incorporating all of the recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, many State Governors, and experts in global health to limit non-essential travel, the courts' current operating status today reflects that all 69 immigration courts remain open to some degree. That means that in many of these locations, despite the grave danger of holding hearings in the midst of a health crisis, lack of leadership is predominant, and confusion reigns. There is no standardised system of reporting when and why specific courts get closed, and why they reopen. The Immigration Judges often hear about

spreading the virus. When proceedings do go forward, they frequently suffer from a shortage of interpreters available to translate proceedings, incomplete files since there are not enough staff members to process the mail and filings, and private bar attorneys puzzling over how they can ethically meet the needs of their clients in the face of non-essential travel mandates pending in their jurisdictions.

Immigration Judges and many stakeholders are desperate for change so that the Immigration Courts are able to meet the health and safety needs of the communities which they serve. The status quo risks further exacerbating the danger to Immigration Judges, the court-going public, as well as the greater community. Short-term, band-

## and Safety Crisis, More Than Five Months In

many other countries, Americans were considering how best to limit its spread. Yet, the Nation's Acting Chief Immigration Judge was engaged in a dangerous power play over who had the authority to display public health posters at courthouses on proper handwashing techniques. Instead of focusing on health and safety and how the courts would be able to continue hearing cases safely in the face of an unfolding and cruel pandemic, Immigration Judges were being admonished to tear down fliers that recommended basic public safety tips, and were told to ration the precious shared bottles of hand sanitiser. Dockets in Immigration Courthouses were exploding with 100-case calendar calls the norm, and immigration judges were improvising how to translate social-distancing safety measures to courtrooms bursting with staff, lawyers, and respondents.

closures at the same time that the public learns of them -- through "tweet" at all hours of the day and night. Some courts are announced closed for cleaning, and then, shortly thereafter, they are deemed free of coronavirus, and ready to address the pending backlog of well-over a million cases.

Sadly, many of the Immigration Judges, court staff, Department of Homeland Security attorneys, respondents, guards and staff at the detention centres, and private bar attorneys that interface with the court have contracted COVID, and yet those same individuals are being pressured to continue operating the courts. With lack of easy access and rapid results to coronavirus testing, Immigration Judges and stakeholders cannot definitively say whether they are sick and are therefore encouraged to work to the brink, even though asymptomatic individuals can be carriers

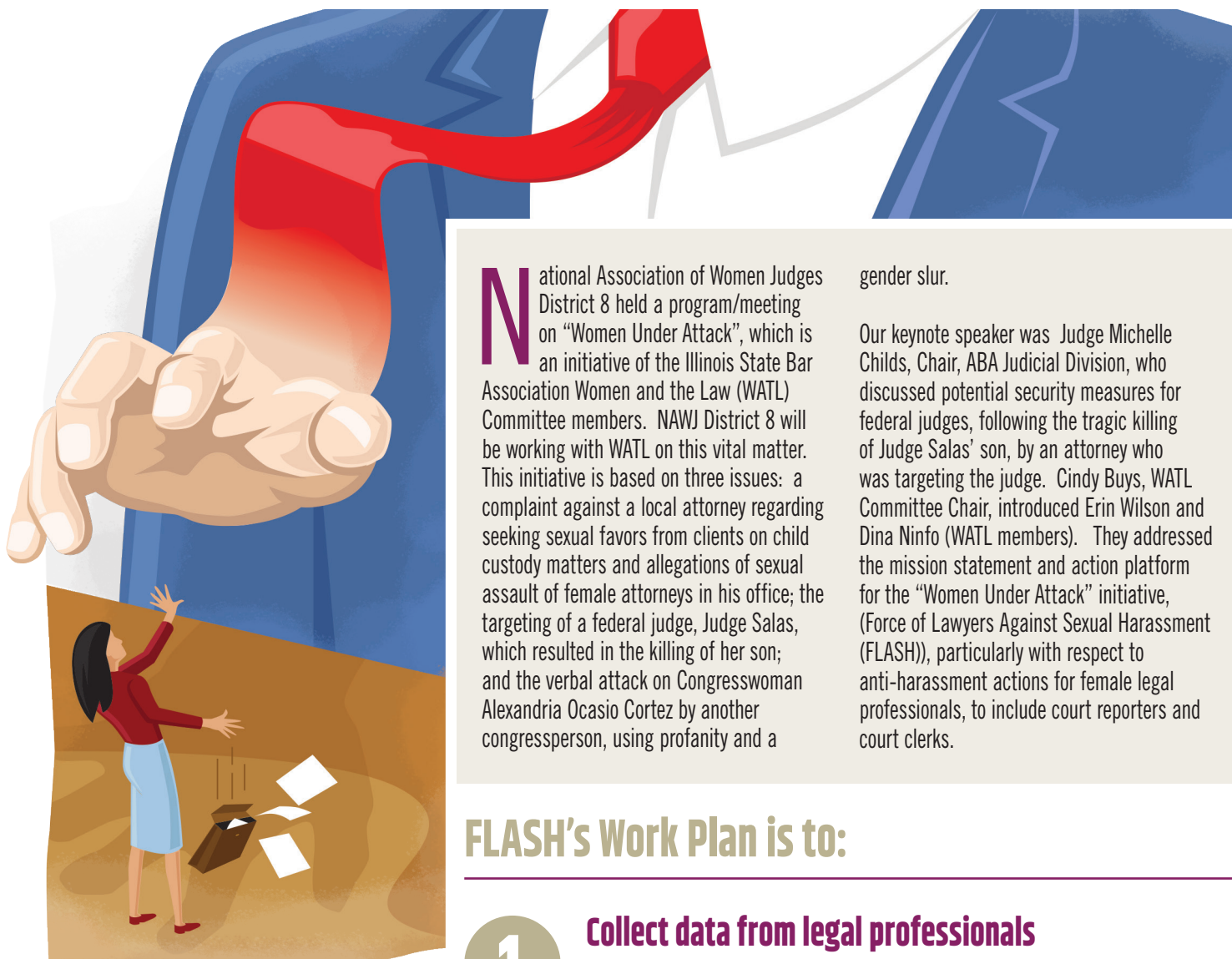
aid solutions have reached the breaking point, and the U.S. Immigration Courts are demanding systemic change, for not only their own health and safety, but that of the greater community.

**This article first appeared on the website of the Immigration and Nationality Law Committee of the Legal Practice Division of the International Bar Association, and is reproduced by kind permission of the International Bar Association, London, UK.  
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*The author is Vice President Eastern Region of the National Association of Immigration Judges (NAIJ). The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the official position of the United States Department of Justice, the Attorney General, or the Executive Office for Immigration Review. The views represent the author's personal opinions, which were formed after extensive consultation with the membership of NAIJ.*

An initiative of the Illinois State Bar Association Women and the Law (WATL) Committee members

# “Women Under Attack”



**N**ational Association of Women Judges District 8 held a program/meeting on “Women Under Attack”, which is an initiative of the Illinois State Bar Association Women and the Law (WATL) Committee members. NAWJ District 8 will be working with WATL on this vital matter. This initiative is based on three issues: a complaint against a local attorney regarding seeking sexual favors from clients on child custody matters and allegations of sexual assault of female attorneys in his office; the targeting of a federal judge, Judge Salas, which resulted in the killing of her son; and the verbal attack on Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez by another congressperson, using profanity and a

gender slur.

Our keynote speaker was Judge Michelle Childs, Chair, ABA Judicial Division, who discussed potential security measures for federal judges, following the tragic killing of Judge Salas’ son, by an attorney who was targeting the judge. Cindy Buys, WATL Committee Chair, introduced Erin Wilson and Dina Ninfo (WATL members). They addressed the mission statement and action platform for the “Women Under Attack” initiative, (Force of Lawyers Against Sexual Harassment (FLASH)), particularly with respect to anti-harassment actions for female legal professionals, to include court reporters and court clerks.

## FLASH’s Work Plan is to:

1

### Collect data from legal professionals

Collect, analyze and maintain data from legal professionals to establish the nature and extent of sexism, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault in the Illinois legal community and issue a white paper.

2

### Collect data from firm policies

Collect and analyze firm policies on sexism, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault within firms; issue a comprehensive and cohesive policy on sexism, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault within firms. Issue FLASH’s analysis and recommendations in a white paper.



By Hon. Ann Breen-Greco

Co-Chair of the NAWJ Human Trafficking Committee



3

### Provide resources

Provide a multi-variety of resources to all legal professionals who are experiencing or have experienced sexism, sexual harassment, and/or sexual assault including, but not limited to: Practice area specific peer support to provide information and resources for professional transitions; Peer support for navigating the ARDC process and the professional and personal aftermath; General mentoring and peer support; and General education to law schools, bar associations, and the legal community as a whole.

4

### Provide recommendations

Provide recommendations on how to prevent sexism, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault. Demand accountability from all Illinois legal professionals by requiring mandatory new lawyer and continuing legal education focused on the elimination of sexism, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault in the Illinois legal community and through the implementation of a consistent code of conduct among Illinois bar associations and professional organizations touching the Illinois legal community.

5

### Provide direct advocacy

Provide direct advocacy and support to the enactment of legislation and policy aimed at addressing sexism, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault throughout the State of Illinois.

FLASH is a task force of Illinois legal professionals united to combat the prevalence of sexism, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault in the Illinois legal community through direct advocacy, policy implementation, education and peer support. Goals and Objectives are to create and foster a safe, respectful and intersectional professional environment for all Illinois legal professionals that adopts a zero-tolerance approach to sexism, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Judge Ann Breen-Greco (WATL member and Director of NAWJ District 8) addressed the third part of the initiative. She discussed the need to be vigilant in speaking out against the use of gender slurs against women and emphasized women should only speak up if they are in a safe space. It should not be left to women solely to address these slurs, but male family members, colleagues, and friends must also take the initiative. Articles on this topic should also be done not only for the legal profession's newsletters but for publication as broadly as possible.

# Life After the Bench

*Who knew I'd ever be helping military? Since World War II, not a single person in my family, not even any cousin, uncle, niece or nephew, ever served. In our caves of white privilege and advanced education, serving was furthest from our thoughts.*

By Hon. Beverly Cutler

Like many Americans, after the 2016 election I was in a deep stew. Fortunately my younger brother, an attorney at Perkins Coie, pulled me out and told me I needed to do what lawyers do, "Go help someone!"

Hundreds of someones later, I continue to aid non-citizens in our military branches obtain their promised citizenship for serving. This hasn't been easy in the years 2017-2020 but it's been some of the most meaningful work I've ever done. Who knew I'd ever be helping military? Since

World War II, not a single person in my family, not even any cousin, uncle, niece or nephew, ever served. In our caves of white privilege and advanced education, serving was furthest from our thoughts.

I was propelled into this new retirement endeavor by the grass-roots luck of knowing a prominent lawyer in the field. But equally important, the immigration judges in our beloved NAWJ had already created, unknowingly, a motivating mental tapestry.

I had previously thought immigration was just another field that didn't really touch on my life when I first met Dana Marks, Joan Churchill, and Ashley Tabaddor. But when I listened to Dana Marks present to us (at a midyear in Laguna Beach, if memory serves) and later as we all followed the struggles of immigration judges to remain independent, my thoughts about what immigration meant really changed. Then in 2017 "immigration" suddenly became the new Civil Rights.

First it was individuals in the U.S. Army whom I helped to keep an immigration status or to fix up their naturalization applications so they would have a chance at citizenship. Their cases came to me as pro bono requests from the American Immigration Lawyers Military Assistance Program. I had already attended in person some AILA conferences to get the flavor of immigration work and to meet people in the field. I also came to attend annually DHS and USCIS stakeholder sessions so I could master how to deal with those agencies.

Soon a variety of class actions got filed. I worked on many of the military ones behind the scenes, with several ACLUs and some great law firms such as Fried Frank, Morgan Lewis, Mayer Brown, and Perkins Coie. Additionally, while some of these class cases remain pending or even after decision, I continue to help individual class members understand what is going on,

*Judge Cutler with military naturalization applicants and class action plaintiffs*

and what are the possibilities for the future.

Sometimes I feel back to my public defender days, because we are taking on the government, instead of being the government, as when I was a judge. The passion to correct wrongful action must be strong in me.

But the real exhilaration I feel comes from the clients. Most of them have lived their entire lives helping themselves as much as they could, culminating in now being here several years, and wanting to be part of the American experiment and dream. They know what it is like not to live in America. They are smart and funny,

philosophic and hardworking, and incredibly devoted to their military careers.

I was a college junior when the Kent State Massacre occurred, pitching me toward law school and a summer job with the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights. I had no idea what would follow. Today I remain eternally grateful for my 35 year judicial career. Who knew that the accompanying pension would give me time to do pro bono work. I love helping real people with civil rights and social justice issues. Besides, I now have cupboards full of teas — green, white, black, brown and orange — from every corner of the world sent as thanks.

*Judge Cutler with new U.S. citizenz at Naturalization Ceremony*





# District News



## DISTRICT ONE (MA, ME, NH, PR, RI)

Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island

## DISTRICT DIRECTOR:

**Hon. Mary Dacey White**

Brookline District Court, Massachusetts

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MASSACHUSETTS  
MAINE  
NEW HAMPSHIRE  
PUERTO RICO  
RHODE ISLAND

1

**MaryLou Muirhead**, former District One Director has been tapped by **President Karen Donoghue** to be on the Law School Outreach Committee. She has reached out to all District One members to reach out to their law schools. MaryLou has gotten a great response and as she said not from the usual suspects! I joined a Zoom meeting with MaryLou and her committee on November, 23rd.

The next meeting of the District One Law School Outreach Committee meeting will take place on January 25 via zoom. Members of the District 1 committee have been meeting with the various local law schools to schedule a meeting with our Judges. The meetings can be a meet and greet or a more formal program. Some committee members are using Mentor Jet, others are creating hybrid

programs and some are creating new programs. District One is very excited about the committee and the programs the members are planning.

Both the District One Committee and the National Committee are chaired by **MaryLou Muirhead**, First Justice of the Eastern Division of the Housing Court. If anyone has an interest in either committee, please contact Judge Muirhead at [marylou.muirhead@jud.state.ma.us](mailto:marylou.muirhead@jud.state.ma.us).

Our member, **Justice Amy Blake** of the Massachusetts Appeals Court is on a panel March 23, 2021, at the Social Law Library, Boston, MA. The information below she sent to me and I have forwarded to our District One Members. It may be of interest to all of our NAWJ members.

The program will be moderated by Atlanta attorney and film maker, **Sharon Rowen** and will involve her documentary *Balancing the Scales*.

From her website:

This film explores the history of women lawyers in the US, why their attempts to break the glass ceiling have failed, and what we can do to change the cultural attitudes which prevent women from balancing power at the top.

The program is FREE and I would encourage you to sign up if you are interested. Here is the Link:

<https://www.sociallaw.com/education/event-detail/2021/03/23/default-calendar/balancing-the-scales—a-film-by-sharon-rowen>



## DISTRICT TWO (CT, NY, VT)

Connecticut, New York, Vermont

## DISTRICT DIRECTOR:

**Hon. Kathy J. King**

Supreme Court of New York, Kings County

Email: [kjking@nycourts.gov](mailto:kjking@nycourts.gov)

CONNECTICUT  
NEW YORK  
VERMONT

2

## Recognition and Awards

District Two Extends Congratulations to Four Distinguished Jurists on their Retirement. We look forward to their continued membership and participation in NAWJ.

**Hon. Lucy Billings**, Supreme Court, New York County, NAWJ Judicial Education and Academic Network Committee

**Hon. Ellen Gesmer**, Appellate Division, 1st Department, NAWJ International Committee

**Hon. Sheri Roman**, Appellate Division, 2nd Department, NAWJ Judicial Education and Academic

Network Committee VP Publications (2008)

**Hon. Bernice Siegal**, Supreme Court, Queens County, NAWJ Membership Outreach and Retention Committee



In October 2020 **Chief Judge Janet DiFiore** appointed to lead the efforts of the New York State Courts in implementing the recommendations set forth in Secretary Jeh Johnson's Equal Justice Report. Chief Judge DiFiore designated Secretary Johnson to

prepare a report to identify institutional racism and implicit bias and recommend proposed solutions. Judge Mendelson will be working with judicial leaders to develop plans for putting equal justice reforms into action.

## Programming

District Two, in collaboration with Monroe College, is hosting a Color of Justice Virtual Speaker Series. The planning committee for the virtual speaker series includes new members **Hon. Lumarie Maladono-Cruz** and **Professor Yadhira Gonzalez-Taylor**, together with **Hon. Doris Gonzalez**, **Hon. Bahaati Pitt**, **Hon. Lourdes**



Hon. Lumaire  
Maladono-Cruz



Prof. Yadhira  
Gonzalez-Taylor

**Ventura, Dean Guylaine Harrison, Dean Jody McCalla, Asst. Director of Student Engagement, Faye Roberts-Paul, and Stacey Marques, Esq.**

The program will be held on February 27th, March 20th, April 17, 2021 and will incorporate the Law Day theme of "Advancing the Rule of Law Now," at its conclusion on Law Day, May 1, 2021. Panelists will include judges, lawyers and law students who will present high school and college students with information on the law school admissions process, admission to the bar, and selecting a legal career.

NY Women In Prison Committee sponsored its annual Beyond the Bars project which provides

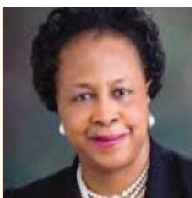
much needed support for incarcerated women during the holiday season. In light of the COVID 19 health crisis, Co-Chairs **Hon. Cheryl J. Gonzalez** and **Hon. Betty J. Williams (Ret.)** made special efforts to ensure that gift bags were stuffed with items that the women could use including socks, wash clothes, candy canes and nail polish. 225 gift bags were sent to Taconic Correctional Facility. The Beyond the Bars project also had 1200 Day Planners delivered to both Taconic and Albion Correctional Facilities and sponsored an Amazon Book Drive on behalf of the women at these facilities.

NAWJ NY Chapter and the Queens County Women's Bar Association, co-sponsored a program with the Queens Women's Bar Association on Wednesday, October 28th, 2020, entitled "Ensuring Access to Justice for the Unrepresented Court Users in the Virtual Court Era and Beyond". NAWJ member **Justice Edwina G. Mendelson**, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge, discussed the Unrepresented Court Users Report which identifies efforts

undertaken by the NYS Unified Court System to maintain access to justice, discuss the barriers encountered by the unrepresented and offer a preliminary blueprint for best practices serving all court users for the duration of the pandemic and beyond.

NAWJ NY Chapter hosted a Financial Planning Online Webinar on November 18, 2020. Madison Planning Group presented information on investing post pandemic.

District 2 hosted a New Member Power Hour on December 3, 2020. **Judge Kathy King**, together with **Judge Marguerite Grays**, NAWJ NY Chapter President welcomed new members including **Judges Maryann Brigantti, Jill Epstein, Wendy Li, Lenora Foote-Beavers, Wilma Guzman, Lumarie Maladono-Cruz, Linet Rosado, Naita Semaj, Carol Sharpe, Ari Tobi-Aiyemo and Prof. Yadhira Gonzalez-Taylor** in the meet and greet virtual event and discussed member engagement.



#### DISTRICT THREE (DE,NJ,PA,VI)

Delaware, New Jersey,  
Pennsylvania,  
Virgin Islands

#### CO-DISTRICT DIRECTORS:

**Hon. Sandra Ann Robinson**  
State of New Jersey  
Email: [kwras@yahoo.com](mailto:kwras@yahoo.com)

**Hon. Avis Bishop-Thompson**  
Superior Court, New Jersey  
Email: [avis.bishopthompson@njcourts.gov](mailto:avis.bishopthompson@njcourts.gov)

NAWJ New Jersey Chapter continues to prepare for a fabulous Color of Justice (COJ) program that will include invited guest participation from state chair leadership in the District III States of Delaware, Pennsylvania and the Virgin Islands. The COJ program students include seniors and juniors, from the eight northern New Jersey Counties: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union, Warren County. Participating also in the COJ program will be Fairleigh Dickinson

University Para Legal Studies, Montclair State University Para Legal Studies, Rutgers Law School and Seton Hall University Department of Legal Studies.

The keynote speaker for our April 17, 2021 COJ will be the **Honorable Justice Fabiana Pierre-Louis**, the newest Associate Supreme Court Justice in District III seated in New Jersey. Justice Fabiana Pierre-Louis is also the first Black woman to serve

on the New Jersey Supreme Court. Justice Pierre-Louis began her legal career as a law clerk to New Jersey Supreme Court Associate Justice John E.



Wallace Jr., whose seat she now occupies.

Associate Justice Fabiana Pierre-Louis was sworn in on September 1, 2020.



#### DISTRICT FOUR (DC,MD, VA)

District of Columbia, Maryland,  
Virginia

#### DISTRICT DIRECTOR:

**Hon. Anita Josey-Herring**  
Chief Judge Superior Court of the District of Columbia  
Email: [herringa@dsc.gov](mailto:herringa@dsc.gov)

Following up last fall on District 4's Happy Hour with a Purpose and film sharing *The Judge*, hosted by **Judge Vanessa Ruiz** last fall, District 4

shook out their Zoom carpet for a Happy Hour on February 10. **Judges Rupa Ranga Puttagunta and Julie Weatherly** anchored the event,

welcoming guests and encouraging participants to share their best and worst stories of the past year.

While challenges are still looming, it is clear that the judiciary has stepped up to the plate with virtual hearings, reconstructed courtrooms, care for its employees and the public. On top of our professional concerns, there are family needs for our children learning at home and elderly parents to protect. Yikes! The beverage of your choice and spend an hour in the company of your fellow judges is a welcome break.

District 4's Women Moving Forward Conference at

the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women has been rescheduled for September 23, 2021, providing the COVID pandemic is under control and the Department of Corrections lifts its present ban on all visitors to the state prisons.

The Irma Raker Dinner for NAWJ's Maryland Chapter and the Maryland Women's Legislative Caucus was cancelled again due to the pandemic and the Maryland legislators struggle to complete its work virtually. But the Women Legislators'

Caucus conveyed their hope and intention to resume the tradition of meeting with the women judges to share and support issues of mutual interest next year.



**DISTRICT FIVE (FL,GA,NC,SC)**  
Florida, Georgia, North Carolina,  
South Carolina

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Tanya Brinkley**  
11th Judicial Circuit Court, Miami, Florida  
Email: [tbrinkley@jud11.flcourts.org](mailto:tbrinkley@jud11.flcourts.org)

FLORIDA  
GEORGIA  
NORTH CAROLINA  
SOUTH CAROLINA

5

I am excited to lead District 5 and new and exciting programming for 2021. We are a strong group of members who are excited to promote NAWJ. I am proud to announce the following State Chair appointments.

**Florida State Chair – Judge Miesha Darrough**  
(Miami)

**Georgia State Chair – Judge Kimberly Esmond Adams** (Atlanta)

**North Carolina State Chair – Judge Kimberly**

**Best** (Charlotte)

**South Carolina State Chair –**  
**Administrative Law Judge Danette**  
**Mincey** (Charleston)

We held a 2021 Kickoff to gather volunteers for programming on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 5:30pm. At that time, we will be building volunteer teams for programming, newsletter, and membership recruitment/retention. This will

be the year of mentorship and inclusion and we will lead programming that supports that goal. We are excited to roll out the 2021 events which will be Color of Justice, Mentor Jet, Bar to Bench, Diversity in the Profession, A Day in the Life, and Good Guys (in partnership with Florida Association of Women Judges). These programs are aimed at school age, college/law students, and practicing attorneys. We are looking forward to an exciting year!



**DISTRICT SIX (AL, LA, MS, TN)**  
Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi,  
Tennessee

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Lynda Jones**  
Davidson County Court, Tennessee  
Email: [lyndajones@jis.nashville.org](mailto:lyndajones@jis.nashville.org)

ALABAMA  
LOUISIANA  
MISSISSIPPI  
TENNESSEE

6

### 100 years ago. 28 words. 1 vote. Ongoing Celebration!

We will be extending our commemoration of the 100th anniversary of ratification of the 19th Amendment – 28 simple words – and the pivotal role that Tennessee played in that moment in history with our 2021 annual conference in Nashville. We had hoped to celebrate this anniversary with you in 2020. But, as one of our planning committee members aptly noted, our sisters spent more than 70 years working to realize woman suffrage, we're used to waiting.

We have some exciting things in store. We will retell the story of Harry Burn, who broke the stalemate on ratification by voting in favor at the urging of his mother. We will also hear from Elaine Weiss, author of *The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*, which is the story of how America's women won their electoral freedom and the opening campaign in the great 20th century battle for civil rights. One of our receptions will be held in the Parthenon, a full-size replica of the original Parthenon in Athens, which stands proudly as the centerpiece of Centennial Park, Nashville's premier urban park. Our reception will

be presided over by the 42-foot statue of Pallas Athena, which is the focus of the Parthenon, just as it was in ancient Greece. Athena is the Greek goddess of wisdom, the useful arts, and prudent warfare, which surely makes her the matriarch of all women judges, since those are the very qualities that make women amazing judges – wisdom, practical skills and methods, and most especially the art of prudent warfare. Centennial Park is also home to the Tennessee Woman Suffrage Monument. We will have interesting and timely educational programming and speakers. And, of course, we would never host visitors to





Nashville without showcasing our rich musical roots and remarkable local talent. We hope to see you in Nashville October 6-9, 2021!

Here's just a little bit of the story of the drama that unfolded in Nashville in the summer of 1920.

*The constitutional amendment for women's votes, first introduced in Congress in 1878, stalled for the next 40 years. In June of 1919, the amendment was finally pushed through both houses. By March of 1920, Tennessee stood as the best and last*

*hope as the 36th state needed for ratification.*

*Activists for and against woman suffrage converged in Nashville for the summer special session of the Tennessee General Assembly. Among the Tennessee suffragists was prominent Nashvillian Anne Dallas Dudley, who was often heard to remark, "This is a government of, by and for the people, and only the law denies that women are people!" And to those who maintained only men should vote because only men bear arms, Dudley retorted, "Women bear armies."*

*Anne Dudley was joined by suffragist sister, J. Frankie Pierce, the daughter of a house slave of a Tennessee Congressman. In addition to fighting for votes for women, Pierce was an unwavering education advocate and an innovative social justice warrior, whose leadership in supporting white women suffragists was a rare alliance unique to Nashville.*

*After weeks of vigorous lobbying and heated debates, the resolution for ratification easily passed the state Senate. On August 18, after voting twice to table the amendment, Representative Harry T. Burn, who was the*

*youngest Tennessee legislator at the time, surprised everyone by voting "aye." In his pocket, Burn carried a letter from his mother, Phoebe "Miss Febb" Burn. Interspersed with news about the weather and family, Miss Febb wrote:*

*"Dear Son, ... Hurray and vote for Suffrage and don't keep them in doubt. I've been waiting to see how you stood but have not seen anything yet. ... Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt with her "Rats." Is she the one that put rat in ratification, Ha! With lots of love, Mama."*  
*Febb Burn, an avid reader, later told a reporter that she had been interested in suffrage for years and after reading the anti-suffrage speeches published in the papers felt compelled to force the issue.*

*The 1920 summer drama in Nashville, a model for peacefully effecting social change, ended with the enfranchisement of tens of millions of women. All because of Harry Burn's one vote. Febb Burn later said that she was pressured in person by the first lady of Louisiana to recant the letter and say it was a fraud. She refused.*

**By Hon. Barbara D. Holmes**  
**2021 Conference Chair**



**DISTRICT SEVEN (MI, OH, WV)**  
 Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Michelle Rick**  
 Michigan Court of Appeals  
 Email: [rickm@clinton-county.org](mailto:rickm@clinton-county.org)

MICHIGAN  
 OHIO  
 WEST VIRGINIA

7

## The pandemic could not derail Michigan's NAWJ activities

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven devastating in so many ways. The world has experienced significant pain and disruptions over the course of this past year. By now, many have personally experienced the human toll the coronavirus has inflicted – the loss of life, the loss of jobs, disruptions to education – just to name a few. And while these solemn realities can be neither ignored nor overstated, we are proud that NAWJ and its membership have risen to leadership roles during this crisis. NAWJ has proven that courts are essential and can function effectively and efficiently even in times of peril. Additionally, NAWJ has exhibited itself a leader in a path

forward, toward normalcy, however that term is now defined.

Michigan's NAWJ membership has exemplified these principals. We are grateful that Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice and NAWJ member **Bridget McCormack** has an infectiously disruptive spirit and is committed to justice for all. Prior to the pandemic striking the United States, the Chief Justice was transforming Michigan's judiciary to bring it into the 21st century. Chief Justice McCormack provided trial courts with innovative tools like Zoom licenses for every trial court judge, as well as the means to simulcast court proceedings on YouTube. It's easy to comprehend how those tools enabled Michigan's trial courts to keep their doors open, even when

the public health crisis caused buildings to be shut down. It's also easy to understand why the Chief Justice was recognized by the American Bar Association as a 2021 Legal Rebel and Trailblazer. <https://www.abajournal.com/legalrebels/article/thanks-to-chief-justice-the-michigan-supreme-court-pivoted-to-remote-proceedings-during-covid-19>

Michigan's NAWJ membership took their cue from the Chief Justice. In addition to providing the public with essential services, they rose to the occasion to continue to extend programing opportunities to law students and lawyers. In October 2020, Michigan NAWJ co-chair **Zenell Brown** coordinated the first of its kind virtual MentorJet. The event was co-sponsored by the

University of Detroit Mercy Law School Women's caucus. Fourteen mentors and approximately 20 students participated. Mentors were placed in 5 meeting rooms, and groups of students were moved from room to room at 15 minute intervals. Discussions were led by the participating judges, including NAWJ President-elect **Judge Elizabeth White** and District 7 Director **Judge Michelle Rick**. The event was a success.

### November MentorJet with Michigan State Law School

With the ease of the experience (thanks to NAWJ tech support), Michigan co-Chair Cori Barkman led a second MentorJet event in November at Michigan State University Law School. This event was co-sponsored by MSU Law's career services. It was held over a lunch hour and followed the same format as sponsored by MSU Law's Career Services. Feedback of the lunchtime program was very positive. The MSU Law School and students look forward to continuing MentorJet into the future.

Michigan's co-chairs are busy planning additional virtual MentorJet events with other Michigan law schools in the spring.

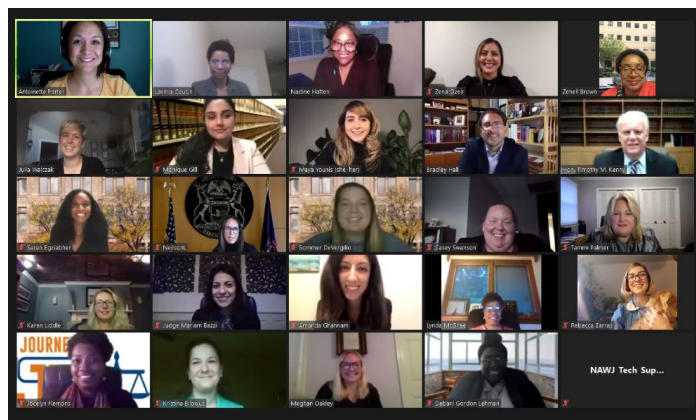
Michigan Co-chair **Cori Barkman** has also been working with the State Bar of Michigan (SBM) and state and federal judges in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to transport the Face of Justice (FOJ) program to north of Michigan's Mackinac Bridge. Face of Justice is a joint program with the State Bar Diversity and Inclusion office. It is based on

NAWJ's Color of Justice programming. FOJ is offered to MI middle and high school youth of every background, culture, gender identity, and race to encourage them to see themselves as a face of the justice system. Ms. Barkman's goal is to offer FOJ programming to youth in Marquette and the Chippewa tribal youth in Sault Ste. Marie in the fall 2021.

Michigan Co-Chair **Zenell Brown** herself wears many hats. She is the Executive Court Administrator for the 3rd Circuit, which serves Wayne County. She is committed to the mission of diversity and inclusion. She is the author of *Coffee and Conversations: Inclusion and Belonging*, G Publishing (August 5, 2020). Ms. Brown promotes discussions of diversity and inclusion using books. "No one should be naïve to think that book clubs or discussion of good books will move the needle forward on diversity and inclusion. But they are definitely a tool and a starting point to engage attorneys. They can be the platform that prompt attorneys to make their

day-to-day routines more inclusive..." To date, Ms. Brown continues to engage women judges and lawyers by podcast, panel discussions, and through book clubs.

As you can see, even in times of a worldwide pandemic, the Michigan chapter of NAWJ forge ahead promoting the mission of NAWJ. They cannot be derailed.



**DISTRICT EIGHT (IL, IN, KY)**  
Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Ann Breen-Greco**  
Independent Administrative Judiciary Professional  
Email: [annbreen-greco@sbcglobal.net](mailto:annbreen-greco@sbcglobal.net)

ILLINOIS  
INDIANA  
KENTUCKY

8

District 8 held its holiday party on December 18. We were pleased to have the National Association of Women Judges, **President Karen Donahue**, join us. She was able to connect with old friends and new ones. Are next event is a program for law students to be held February 24, 2021.

As the liaison from the ABA Judicial Division

to the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, I will be attending the World Forum for Women Lawyers on January 27, 28, and 29, 2021. I offered to provide a link for anyone in District 8 who is interested in attending. There is a registration fee. Additionally, I will also be attending the Commission's ABA mid year meeting on February 18.

We are also working with the ABA Judicial Division Standing Committee on Diversity in the Judiciary and planning virtual visits with elementary and high school students to engage them in law/civics related activities, covering the unprecedented events of the last months. This encompasses the largest voter turnout ever in this country, including mail in ballots, that has been the basis for unsubstantiated and

judicially rejected claims of voter fraud; the George Senate run-off election; the insurrection at the Capitol which highlighted the difference in treatment of Black Lives

Matter protesters and those who broke into the Capitol; and the upcoming inauguration, which is the first ever in a pandemic. We will be using all available resources such as the NAWJ's

Informed Voters Project to help develop an appropriate program.



**DISTRICT NINE (IA, MO, WI)**  
Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Celene Gogerty**  
Judicial District 5 Court, Iowa  
Email: [celene.gogerty@iowacourts.gov](mailto:celene.gogerty@iowacourts.gov)

IOWA  
MISSOURI  
WISCONSIN

9

U. S. Magistrate **Judge Celeste F. Bremer** will move to "Recall Status" on May 31, 2021, after 36 years of service in the Southern District of Iowa. In addition to civil and criminal case management, and civil trials, Judge Bremer has been active in judicial education programs for local and federal judges, including the NAWJ district meetings. In 2002, she obtained her

doctorate in Adult Education. She regularly teaches at the Federal Judicial Center. Recently she has participated in designing judicial education through ABA ROLI programs in Egypt, and has taught mediation for judges in India, Malaysia and Poland. She has been a member of NAWJ since 1985 and is a member of IAWJ. She can be contacted at [celeste\\_bremer@iasd.uscourts.gov](mailto:celeste_bremer@iasd.uscourts.gov).

The Infinity Project had a virtual CLE on December 9, 2020 called "From Graduation to Gavel". The project is an organization dedicated to increasing the number of women on the bench (both state and federal) throughout the Eighth Circuit.



**DISTRICT TEN (KS, MN, NE, ND, SD)**  
Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Cheryl Ann Rios**  
Shawnee County District Court, Kansas  
Email: [crios@shawneecourt.org](mailto:crios@shawneecourt.org)

KANSAS  
MINNESOTA  
NEBRASKA  
NORTH DAKOTA  
SOUTH DAKOTA

10

District 10 participated in a Zoom Happy Hour in November. We were able to meet and discuss important ideas related to NAWJ and in our own State's and focused on how to increase membership.

#### Kansas:

Governor Kelly appointed **Melissa Taylor Standridge** to serve on the Kansas Supreme Court.

The following is the article posted on Governor Kelly's website: "Governor Laura Kelly today appointed Melissa Taylor Standridge to the Kansas Supreme Court. Standridge will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Carol Beier.

#### North Dakota:

I DISSENT: An Event Honoring the Legacy of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was held on Friday, December 11, 2020 from 3:00 p.m. to 5 p.m. via electronic means. The program was sponsored

by the Women's Lawyers Section of the State Bar Association of North Dakota and the Law Women's Caucus of the University of North Dakota School of Law. The event was moderated by University of North Dakota School of **Law Prof. Denitsa Mavrova Heinrich**, also the President of the Women's Lawyers Section, who summarized Justice Ginsburg's career and her many contributions to the law and advancing human rights. The event featured retired and sitting judges and justices who discussed and analyzed some of Justice Ginsburg's most groundbreaking decisions and compelling dissents, and the effects they had on shaping the law and our society.

The following decisions and dissents of Justice Ginsburg were discussed: United States v. Virginia, by **Magistrate Judge Alice Senechal** of the United States District Court for the District of North Dakota; Bush v. Gore, by **Justice Carol Ronning Kapsner**, retired Justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court; Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., by **Justice Lisa Fair McEvers**,

Justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court; Gonzales v. Carhart, by **Justice Mary Meuhlen Maring**, retired Justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court; Shelby County v. Holder, by **Magistrate Judge Karen Klein**, retired United States Magistrate Judge for the District of North Dakota; and Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, by **Judge Shon Hastings**, Chief United States Bankruptcy Judge for the District of North Dakota.

The event was well attended with over 125 judges, lawyers and law students participating in the event.

#### Nebraska:

On December 14, 2020, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts appointed **Michelle "Shellie" Sabata** of Lincoln to the Separate Juvenile Court of Lancaster County. Sabata, 49, has served as Deputy County Attorney in the Lancaster County Attorney's Office since 1998. As Deputy County Attorney, her primary duties included reviewing



investigations to make charging decisions in law violation and abuse/neglect cases on behalf of juveniles. Further duties included presenting evidence for the purpose of adjudicating cases and implementing rehabilitative plans for families appearing in Juvenile Court as well as training new deputy county attorneys. She has spent many years serving on both the Lancaster County Juvenile Drug Treatment Court as well as the

Lancaster County Family Drug Court. Sabata holds a Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration from Doane College and a Juris Doctor from the University of Nebraska College of Law. She is a member of the Nebraska Bar Association, American Bar Association, National District Attorneys Association, and Nebraska County Attorneys Association. A lifelong Lincolnite, Sabata is also active in the community as an adjunct

professor at Concordia University-Nebraska, a volunteer judge for mock trial and oral argument competitions at the University of Nebraska College of Law, and a long-time volunteer with local youth sports organizations. She is also passionate about serving on the Leadership Council of HopeLNK Suicide Prevention Coalition. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Linda S. Porter.



**DISTRICT ELEVEN (AR, OK, TX)**  
Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Maria Salas-Mendoza**  
120th Judicial District Court, Texas  
Email: [masalas@epcounty.com](mailto:masalas@epcounty.com)

ARKANSAS  
OKLAHOMA  
TEXAS

11

We welcomed 13 new NAWJ members: **Judge Gisela Triana**, **Judge Renee Betancourt**, **Judge Margaret Poissant**, **Judge Maria Cantu Hexsel**, **Judge Leslie Osborne**, **Judge Dayna Blazey**, **Justice April Farris**, **Judge Yahara Lisa Gutierrez**, **Justice Rebeca Huddle**, **Judge Jim Kovach**, **Judge Jessica Mangrum**, **Judge Robbie Partida-Kipness** and **Justice Vanessa Rivas-Molloy**.

The Texas State Chairs have been meeting monthly and have Color of Justice programs planned for Austin (Feb. 18, 2021), Houston (April 2021) and El Paso (May 1, 2021). Members are working on COJ programs in Corpus Christi and San Antonio.

On January 1, 2021, the following women were sworn in as new judges:

**Bonnie Goldstein**, Fifth Court of Appeals; **Denise Garcia**, Fifth Court of Appeals; **Monica Purdy**, 95th District Court (Dallas); **Kim Brown**, 254th Family District Court (Dallas); **Audra Riley**, Criminal District Court No. 3; **Patricia Baca**, 346th District Court (El Paso); **Jessica Vazquez**, El Paso County Criminal Court No. 4; **Marlene Gonzalez**, 388th District Court (El Paso); **Lyda Ness-Garcia**, 383rd District Court (El Paso); **Veronica Rivas-Molloy** - First Court of Appeals; **Amparo Guerra** - First Court of Appeals; **April Farris** - First Court of Appeals (appointed by Gov. Abbott to fill a vacant seat after Justice Keyes retired); **Jeralynn Manor** - Harris County 80th Civil District Court; **Cheryl Elliott Thornton** - Harris County 164th Civil District Court; **Brittany**

**Morris** - Harris County 333rd Civil District Court; **Dawn Rogers** - Harris County 334th Civil District Court; **Ana Martinez** - Harris County 179th Criminal District Court; **Colleen Gaido** - Harris County 337th Criminal District Court; **Te'iva Bell** - Harris County 339th Criminal District Court; **Natalia Cornelio** - Harris County 351st Criminal District Court; **Janet Buening Heppard** - Fort Bend County 387th District Court; **Tameika Carter** - Fort Bend County 400th District Court; **Kali Morgan** - Fort Bend County 505th District Court; **Tina Torres**, 407th District Court (San Antonio); **Nicole Garza**, 37th District Court (San Antonio); and **Jackie Herr Valdes**, 386th District Court (San Antonio).

#### Appointment and elevations:

Congratulations to new **Justice Clarissa Silva**, 13th Court of Appeals (Corpus Christi and Edinberg, TX) and to **Susan Kelly**, appointed on December 17, 2020, to the 54th District Court, term beginning Jan. 1, 2021.

**Judge Lori Valenzuela**, 437th District Court, was appointed to the Fourth District Court of Appeals.

**Judge Rosie Alvarado**, 438th District Court (San Antonio), Appointed to the Texas Children's Commission.

**Chief Justice Dori Contreras** appointed to the Executive Committee for the Council of Chief Judges for the State Courts of Appeal (CCJSCA) and also serves as Chair of the CCJSCA Membership Committee.

Kudos to **Judge Karen Sage**, 299th Criminal District Court (Austin), former District 11 Director, for her election to serve as secretary to the NAWJ Board of Directors **Judge Brandy Mueller**, County Court #6 (Austin), former District 11 Director, was appointed to serve as NAWJ Chair of Projects; and **Judge Maya Guerra Gamble**, 459th Civil District Court (Austin) and **Justice Julie Countiss**, 1st Court of Appeals (Houston) who were appointed NAWJ Membership Committee members.

**Tracey Christopher**, new Chief Justice of the 14th Court of Appeals, **Justice Yvonne Rodriguez**, sworn in as Chief Justice of the 8th Court of Appeals, after winning the 2020 General Election in November. She is the 16th Chief Justice and the first Latina Chief Justice in the Court's 110-year history. **Judge Darlene Byrne**, 126th District Court, elected Chief Judge of the Third Court of Appeals.

On January 11th Univision featured several Latina judges elected in Houston. Even though Harris County has over 2 million Latinos, comprising approximately 45% of the county's population, Latinos are substantially underrepresented on the bench. In its Hispanics Making History segment, Univision interviewed the following "Super Seis" or Super Six: Judge Julia Maldonado (507th District Court), **Judge Lesley Briones** (Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 4), **Associate Municipal Judge/Justice-Elect Amparo Guerra** (1st Court of Appeals, Place 5), **Justice-Elect Veronica Rivas-Molloy** (1st Court of Appeals, Place 3), **Judge-Elect Natalia 'Nata' Cornelio** (351st



### HOLIDAY TOAST 2020 for District 11

District Court), and **Judge-Elect Ana Martinez** (179th District Court).

District 11 partnered with the Judicial Section, Hispanic Issues Section, Women and the Law

time, the Texas Supreme Court has 4 women on its highest court. These history making justices discussed their path to the judiciary, the challenges they have overcome and provide their insight regarding the judiciary moving forward.

Section and Texas Women Lawyers to host a complimentary webinar: Supreme Women: Meet a Quartet of Justices Making Texas History on January 21st. For the first

With over 150 attendees, the webinar was a huge success!



*Hon. Jane Bland*



*Hon. Debra Lehrmann*



*Hon. Eva Guzman*



*Hon. Rebeca Huddle*



**DISTRICT TWELVE (AZ, CO, NM, UT, WY)**  
Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Colleen Clark**  
Arapahoe County Court, Colorado  
Email: [colleen.clark@judicial.state.co.us](mailto:colleen.clark@judicial.state.co.us)

### Record Number of Women Judges and Women Judges of Color on the Bench in Colorado

This month Justice Maria Berkenkotter, a former Boulder County Chief Judge joined the Colorado Supreme Court putting a record number of three women on the seven-panel court. The rise of women on the bench and particularly women of color here in Colorado was well captured in this article written by Chandra Thomas Whitfield of Essence magazine:

<https://www.essence.com/feature/record-number-black-women-judges-appointed-colorado/>

Since the writing of this article in September 2020, we have seen Governor Polis continue to broaden the diversity of our bench by appointing

men and women of diverse backgrounds.

### Retirement of Chief Judge Emily Anderson

Longtime NAWJ member Emily Anderson is retiring after sixteen years on the bench. A long champion of supporting women on the bench, Judge Anderson has been a great leader not only through the NAWJ but also through the Colorado Women's Bar Association and LGBTQ Bar Association here in Colorado. We are so grateful for her influence here and her support of this organization. We wish her much luck in her next adventure!

### Court in the Time of Covid

Jury trials are mostly on hold across the district

as western states carefully try to navigate this uncharted territory. Novel issues are being raised in the appellate courts in every jurisdiction in regard to COVID. Most civil trials have taken a backseat as court try to deal with the criminal trial backlogs.

### New Women Judges Virtual Happy Hour NAWJ

District Director **Judge Colleen Clark** and Colorado Director **Judge Jaci Brown** are organizing a virtual happy hour for all the new women judges appointed to the bench in the past year. The event will be held this spring and we are excited to introduce this awesome organization to many new members!



**DISTRICT THIRTEEN (AK, HI, ID, MT, OR, WA)**  
Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**  
**Hon. Lisa A. Paglisotti**  
King County District Court  
Email: [lisa.paglisotti@kingcounty.gov](mailto:lisa.paglisotti@kingcounty.gov)

District 13 is pleased to announce that District 13 member **Judge Linda Coburn** was elected to the Washington State Court of

Appeals. Congratulations to Judge Coburn! Congratulations also to District 13 member **Judge Mafe Rajul** who was appointed to the

Washington State Interpreter Commission. Congratulations to one of our newest members, **Chief Judge Ramona Villagomez Manglona**



on the opening of a state-of-the-art U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands. Judge Manglona spearheaded the project and recently hosted a tour of the facility for the N.M.I. Judiciary.

Washington Supreme Court **Justice G. Helen Whitener** has been named Judge of the Year by the Western Region of the National Black

Law Student Association (WRBLSA). She will be recognized for the honor and speak during Western Regional Convention's 53rd Annual Awards Gala, being held virtually on Saturday, January 9, 2021. The National Black Law Student Association (NBLSA) represents over 6,000 minority law students from more than 200 chapters across the United States. The Western Region is comprised of Alaska, Arizona,

California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington, encompassing 40 law schools and more than 350 members.

Please join District 13 members for a discussion of **Isabelle Wilkerson's** book *Caste* on Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 7:00 PST.



**DISTRICT FOURTEEN (CA, NV)**  
California, Nevada

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR:**

**Hon. Wendy McGuire Coats**

Superior Court of California, Contra Costa County

Email: [wcoat@contracosta.courts.ca.gov](mailto:wcoat@contracosta.courts.ca.gov)

CALIFORNIA  
NEVADA

14

### District 14 Recap and Reconnect

We had a great end of the year Zoom Social Hour. In addition to sharing our 2020 lessons learned, gratitude's, and hopes for 2021, we shared the best books we read in 2020. Below is a sample, what's on your bookshelf?

***Disloyal: A Memoir: The True Story of the Former Personal Attorney to President Donald J. Trump*** by Michael Cohen - Hon. Nancy Wieben Stock-Orange County (ret.)

***Caste, The Origins of Our Discontent*** by Isabel Wilkerson - Hon. Pennie K. McLaughlin, San Diego Superior Court

***Miracle Creek*** by Angie Kim - Hon. Marian F. Gaston, San Diego Superior Court

***Homegoing*** by Yaa Gyasi

***The Women's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*** by Elaine Weiss - Heather Linn Rosing, Shareholder at Klinedinst PC - San Diego, California

***Clap When You Land*** by Elizabeth Acevedo - Hon. Randa Trapp, Supervising Judge Civil Division - San Diego Superior Court

***D-Day: the Battle for Normandy*** by Antony Beevor - Hon. Sharon Mettler, Retired, Kern County

***The Kite Runner*** by Khaled Hosseini (a reread - with my daughter this time around)

***"Unsheltered"*** by Barbara Kingsolver, still reading

***Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents*** by Isabel Wilkerson - Hon. Lia Martin, Los Angeles

***Democracy in Chains*** by Nancy MacLean - Hon. Carol A King, Immigration Judge (ret.), Alameda Co.

***Beartown*** by Fredrick Back - Susan Finlay Marrinan, ret. San Diego

***Olive, Again*** by Elizabeth Strout - Holly Fujie, Los Angeles (CA) Superior Court

***Girl, Woman, Other*** by Bernadine Evaristo, which is a real celebration of black womanhood. - Hon. Phyllis Hamilton, Chief Judge, US District Court, ND California

***The Plot Against America*** by Philip Roth - Hon. Elizabeth Allen White NAWJ President Elect

***Caste*** by Isabel Wilkerson - Hon. Rebecca Westerfield (ret.) San Francisco

***A Promised Land*** by Barack Obama - Comm. Jennifer Lee, Contra Costa

***The Revisioners*** by Margaret Wilkerson - Sarah London - Alameda

***The Warmth of Other Suns*** by Isabel Wilkerson - Hon. Joan P. Weber, San Diego Superior Court

***The Deepest Well*** by Nadine Burke Harris - Hon. Julie Emde, Santa Clara County

***A Promised Land*** by President Obama - Hon. Michael J Popkins, San Diego Superior Court

***The Splendid and the Vile*** by Erik Larson - Judge Judy Chirlin, Los Angeles Superior Court - Retired.

***Parable of the Sower*** by Octavia Butler - Jodi Cleesattle - Supervising Deputy Attorney General, California Department of Justice, San Diego

***The Water Dancer*** by Ta-Nehisi Coates - Hon. Karla D. Kerlin, Los Angeles County

***How to be an Anti-Racist*** by Ingram X. Kendi and ***White Fragility - Why it's So Hard to get White People to Talk About Racism*** by Robin DiAngelo. - Hon. Terrie E. Roberts, San Diego Superior Court

***Deported American: Life After Deportation to Mexico*** by Beth C. Caldwell - Hon. Maria Puente-Porras, Los Angeles County

***The Gifts of Imperfection*** by Brené Brown - Fanny Yu, Esq. - San Diego

***The Nightingale*** by Kristin Hannah - Hon. Jamoa Moberly (Ret.) - Orange County

***The Body Keeps the Score*** by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk - Hon. Anita Santos, Contra Costa County

***The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*** by Michelle Alexander - Comm. Sheryl M Beasley, Los Angeles

***I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*** by Austin Channing Brown - Hon. Wendy McGuire Coats, Contra Costa County





## NAWJ DIRECTORS

### DISTRICT DIRECTORS

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Brookline District Court

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**Hon. Kathy King**  
Supreme Court of New York, Kings County

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Superior Court, New Jersey

**Hon. Sandra Ann Robinson**  
State of New Jersey

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**Hon. Anita Josey-Herring**  
Chief Judge, Superior Court of the District of Columbia

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**Hon. Tanya Brinkley**  
11th Judicial Circuit Court, Miami, Florida

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Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County  
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Chicago Administrative Hearing Department, Illinois

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Judicial District 5 Court, Iowa

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**Hon. Cheryl Rios**  
Shawnee County District Court,  
Third Judicial District, Kansas

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**Hon. Maria Salas-Mendoza**  
120th Judicial District Court, Texas

#### District Twelve (AZ, CO, NM, UT, WY)

**Hon. Colleen Clark**  
Arapahoe County Court, Colorado

#### District Thirteen (AK, HI, ID, MT, OR, WA)

**Hon. Lisa A. Paglisotti**  
King County District Court

#### District Fourteen (CA, NV)

**Hon. Wendy Coats**  
Superior Court of California,  
Contra Costa County

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11th Judicial Circuit Court, Miami, Florida

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Superior Court of the  
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## NAWJ COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

Committees are the backbone of NAWJ. They enable us to utilize the impressive talents and knowledge of our members to support the work of the organization. Committee chairs and members are appointed each year by the current president. Members' willingness to participate is greatly appreciated.

**ADA Compliance Policy** – Hon. Marilyn Paja (Chair)

**Administrative Judiciary** – Hon. Emily Gould Chafa and Hon. Susan Lois Formaker (Co-Chairs)

**Annual Conference Site Selection** – Hon. Marcella Holland (Chair)

**Awards** – Hon. Cindy Davis and Hon. Ariane Vuono (Co-Chairs)

**Bylaws** – Hon. Fernande (Nan) Duffly and Hon. Julie Frantz (Co-Chairs)

**Congressional Women's Caucus Meeting** – Hon. Toni Clarke and Hon. Anita Josey-Herring (Co-Chairs)

**Domestic Violence** – Hon. Tracey Flemings-Davillier and Hon. Amy Ronayne Krause (Co-Chairs)

**Ensuring Racial Equity in the Justice System** – Hon. Terrie Roberts (Chair)

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**Fairness and Access** – Hon. Tamila Ipema and Commissioner Nadia Keilani (Co-Chairs)

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**International Outreach** – Hon. Lisa Walsh (Chair)

**Judicial Education and Academic Network** – Hon. Elizabeth Walsh and Hon. Lisa Walsh (Co-Chairs)

**Judicial Independence** – Hon. Robin Hudson and Hon. Debra Stephens (Co-Chairs)

**Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare** – Hon. Ernestine Gray and Hon. Joy Lobrano (Co-Chairs)

**Law School Outreach** – Hon. Marylou Muirhead (Chair)

**LGBTQ** – Hon. Kristin Rosi (Chair)

**Membership Outreach and Retention** – Hon. Julie Countiss, Hon. Maya Guerra Gamble, and Hon. Kathy King (Co-Chairs)

**Military/Veteran Judges** – Hon. Kirsten Brunson and Hon. Linda Murnane (Co-Chairs)

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## NAWJ NEW MEMBERS SINCE JANUARY 1, 2021

We welcome the following new members of NAWJ:

**Hon. Francine Applewhite**, DOL/OALJ, North Bethesda, MD

**Hon. Michelle Barakat**, 11th Judicial Circuit, Miami, FL

**Hon. Julie Bernard**, Massachusetts Trial Court, Brockton, MA

**Hon. Kimberly Best**, Mecklenburg County District Court, Charlotte, NC

**Hon. Dayna L. Blazey**, 167<sup>th</sup> District Court, Austin, TX

**Ms. Erin Coleman**, Law Offices Of Erin Coleman, Nashville, TN

**Hon. Ashlee Crawford**, Bronx Criminal Court, Bronx, NY

**Hon. Christina DiRaimondo**, 11th Judicial Circuit, Miami, FL

**Hon. Christine Donovan**, Contra Costa County Superior Court, Martinez, CA

**Ms. Jihane Elizee**, Walt Disney World, Winter Garden, FL

**Hon. Tiffany Foxworth-Roberts**, 19th Judicial District Court, Div. M, Sect. VIII, Baton Rouge, LA

**Hon. Rosie Gonzalez**, Bexar County Court At Law No. 13, San Antonio, TX

**Ms. Yadhira Gonzalez-Taylor**, City Of New York, Department Of Education, Bronx, NY

**Ms. Patricia Henrys**, 11th Judicial Circuit Miami-Dade County FL/The Henrys Firm, P.A., Miami, FL

**Hon. Catherine Chen Hester**, Delaware Justice Of The Peace Court, Georgetown, DE

**Hon. Maria Cantú Hexsel**, 53<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Court, Travis County, Austin, TX

**Hon. Leticia Hinojosa**, 13th Court Of Appeals, McAllen, TX

**Professor Kyle Hollar-Gregory**, CUNY/La Guardia College, Jersey City, NJ

**Hon. Lody Jean**, 11th Judicial Circuit, Florida, Miami, FL

**Hon. Annette C. Karem**, Jefferson District Court, Louisville, KY

**Ms. Lauren Lofton**, Yoka & Smith LLP, Los Angeles, CA

**Hon. Shaniek Maynard**, U.S. District Court For The Southern District Of Florida, Port St. Lucie, FL

**Ms. Ciara McManus**, Catholic University Of America School Of Law, Arlington, VA

**Hon. Danette Mincey**, Federal Administrative Law Judge, Mount Pleasant, SC

**Hon. Theresa Neo**, District Court Judge, Duluth, MN

**Hon. Leslie Osborne**, 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals, Dallas, TX

**Hon. Renee Rodriguez-Betancourt**, 449<sup>th</sup> District Court, Edinburg, TX

**Hon. Llinet Rosado**, Bronx Supreme Court, Civil Term, Bronx, NY

**Hon. Christina Ryba**, New York State Supreme Court, Albany, NY

**Hon. Naita Semaj**, Bronx Civil Court, Bronx, NY

**Hon. Wanda Stokes**, Ingham Circuit Court, Mason, MI

**Hon. Lorrie Taylor**, Loudoun County General District Court, Leesburg, VA

**Hon. Gisela D. Triana**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Court of Appeal, Austin, TX

**Hon. Margaret Walsh**, Third Judicial Court, Albany, NY

**Hon. Helen E. Williams**, Superior Court of California, Santa Clara County, San Jose, CA

**Hon. Jacqueline Woodward**, 11th Judicial Circuit, Miami Dade County, Florida, Miami, FL

**Commissioner Melissa Zabor**, Maricopa County Superior Court, Phoenix, AZ

### Board of Directors Holiday Zoom Meeting







# 43<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE



**NASHVILLE**

October 6-10, 2021

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