



May, 2024
Report from District 11
Honorable Gina Benavides

Texas, Arkansas Oklahoma

The Judges of the District have been busy attending conference including the midyear in Austin but also presenting our Color of Justices Programs statewide.

We begin Houston Texas. With the seventeenth annual Color of Justice program was held on April 16, 2024, at the UT School of Law. The event was sponsored by the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ), in partnership with the Travis County Women Lawyers Association (TCWLA), and the UT School of Law William Wayne Justice Center for Public Law. The event was attended by students from Akins, Travis, and Navarro High Schools, as well as Burnet and Lively Middle Schools, who heard from attorneys and judges and learned about the importance of the legal profession in our society.

After a warm welcome by **Judge Karen Sage**, President of NAWJ, the event featured a game of Legal Jeopardy, moderated by **Ciara Parks**, General Counsel of the Texas Board of Law Examiners, and **Kim Hidrogo**, Assistant Travis County Attorney, and two panel discussions with speakers sharing their personal experiences and backgrounds while discussing the importance of personal commitment and perseverance in their roles as lawyers and judges in our community.



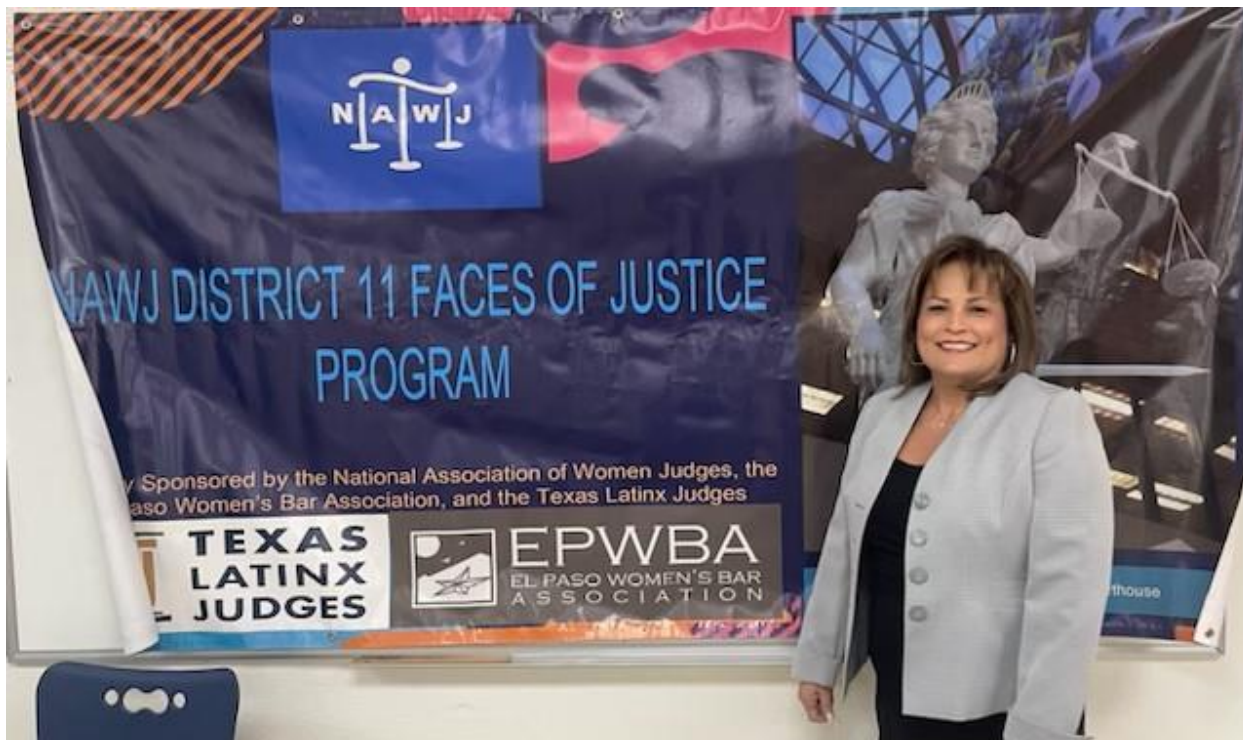
The first panel was moderated by **Rachel Luna** of Luna Law PLLC and featured the following lawyers: **Keiko Anderson**, Law Office of Keiko Griffin, PLLC, **Lee Roy Calderon**, University of Texas System, **Eliana Maruri**, Maruri Law Group, and **Alejandra Salas**, McGinnis Lochridge. The second panel was moderated by **Justice Gisela Triana**, Third Court of Appeals, **Judge Clifford Brown**, 147th District Court, **Judge Bianca Garcia**, Travis County Court at Law #3, and **Judge Nicholas Chu**, Travis County Probate Court #2.

Every year NAWJ awards a \$1,000 Access to Justice Scholarship to a student who has demonstrated a commitment to public interest law. Justice Triana presented Ritika Kumar, a third-year law student at the University of Texas, with the scholarship based on Kumar's demonstrated and passionate commitment to public interest law. In addition, this year, the first Judge Orlinda Naranjo Scholarship was awarded to Rooha Hagharmehdiabadi, a first-year law student at UT with just as compelling a commitment. Both students captivated the audience with their stories of persistence in spite of personal and financial struggles.



Thank you to the sponsors: NAWJ, TCWLA, William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law, Judge Orlinda Naranjo, Law Office of Keiko Griffin, PLLC, McGinnis Lochridge, Luna Law, PLLC, and to H.E.B. for sponsoring the luncheon for the judges, attorneys, and law students who sat with the young students and provided an opportunity for a more personal connection. A special thanks to Keiko Anderson, the hit of the morning, who in her own unscripted Oprah moment, offered individual scholarships to the junior and senior high school students!! They, and us, will never forget your generosity and contagious enthusiasm for learning!





Then our Judges in El Paso had their 4th Color of Justice program on March 1st, 2024, at Riverside High School. Following the model created for its first high school program, all of the lawyer and law enforcement speakers were alumni of Riverside High School. The first panel included three lawyers and one judge, alumni from 1978-1986 graduating classes. The second panel consisted of 5 law enforcement officers, from 1980-1990 graduating classes, who had served with various state and federal organizations.



The speakers talked about their journeys and careers and gave the students motivating advice. The 50 students in attendance included ROTC students and students from criminal Justice and government classes. The program was inspirational and motivating and the speakers were asked to return soon.

