

# 22<sup>nd</sup> WOMEN AND THE LAW CONFERENCE

*and*

## RUTH BADER GINSBURG LECTURE



CONFERENCE PROGRAM

PERSPECTIVES ON JUDGING

Friday, September 27, 2024

**THOMAS JEFFERSON**  
SCHOOL OF LAW  
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Welcome to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Women and the Law Conference and 20<sup>th</sup> Ruth Bader Ginsburg Lecture: “Perspectives on Judging.” Who is on the bench has never been more important. Recently, members of the judiciary have been under attack from all sides of the political spectrum. Judges and Justices have been accused of bias and unethical behavior. This conference brings together leading jurists to discuss judicial decision making, with a particular focus on the effects of enhancing the diversity of the judiciary.

One highlight of our conference is the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Lecture, which was established by Justice Ginsburg when she visited the school in 2003. This year’s RBG lecture, “Her Honor: My Life on the Bench...What Works, What’s Broken, and How to Change it” will be delivered by the Honorable LaDoris Cordell. Judge Cordell will give a personal account of her tenure on the bench and the challenges that she faced as a woman of color. She will also propose ways to make our legal system fairer and more just.

Panels of distinguished judges who have been on the front-line confronting bias, including judges who have been the first female of their race or ethnicity to be appointed to the bench, will then offer their unique perspectives on judging. They will discuss their road to the bench, how their background impacts their approach to judging, and judging on nontraditional courts. Esteemed jurists include: Judge Nadia Keilani, Judge Lily McCoy, Judge Jinsook Ohta, Judge Paula Rosenstein, Judge Renee N.G. Stackhouse, and Judge Rohanee Zapanta. Kimberly Papillon, an expert on decision-making, will discuss the neuroscience of judicial decision-making.

On behalf of the many individuals who helped organize today’s event, we thank you for attending. Special thanks to our partners, the Lawyers Club of San Diego and San Diego County Bar association as well as TJSLS’s Diversity & Inclusion Committee, Law Review, and Women’s Law Association for their support of the conference. We look forward to learning from our speakers and the informative discussions generated by this event.

Thank you for participating and enjoy!

**Linda M. Keller and Julie A. Greenberg**

2024 Women and the Law Conference Co-Chairs

## WOMEN AND THE LAW CONFERENCE 2024 SCHEDULE

### 12:30 – 12:40 WELCOMING REMARKS

**Dawn Dekle**, Dean and President, Thomas Jefferson School of Law

### 12:40 – 1:45 RUTH BADER GINSBURG LECTURE

*Her Honor: My Life on the Bench...What Works, What's Broken, and How to Change It*

**Judge La Doris Cordell**, retired Superior Court Judge and legal commentator

**INTRODUCTION: Linda M. Keller**, Professor of Law, Thomas Jefferson School of Law

### 1:45 – 2:00 BREAK

### 2:00 – 3:20 EXPLORING JUDICIAL DECISION-MAKING

**Judge Jinsook Ohta**, U.S. District Court, Southern District of California

**Kimberly Papillon Esq.**, Attorney, expert on neuroscience and judicial decision making

**Judge Renee N.G. Stackhouse**, Superior Court of California, San Diego

**Judge Rohanee Zapanta**, Superior Court of California, San Diego

**MODERATOR: Julie Greenberg**, Professor Emeritus, Thomas Jefferson School of Law

### 3:20 – 3:35 BREAK

### 3:35 – 4:40 UNCOMMON ROADS TO THE BENCH AND NON-TRADITIONAL COURTS

**Judge Nadia J. Keilani**, Superior Court of California, San Diego

**Judge Lilys McCoy**, Superior Court of California, San Diego

**Judge Paula Rosenstein**, Superior Court of California, San Diego

**MODERATOR: Mikhak Ghorban**, President of Lawyers Club

### 4:45 – 5:45 RECEPTION



## RUTH BADER GINSBURG LECTURER

**LaDoris Hazzard Cordell**, a 1974 graduate of Stanford Law School, was the first lawyer to open a law practice in East Palo Alto, a low-income community of color. In 1978, she was appointed Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at Stanford Law School, where she implemented a successful minority admissions program.

In 1982, Governor Jerry Brown appointed Ms. Cordell to the Municipal Court of Santa Clara County making her the first African American woman judge in northern California. In 1988, Judge Cordell won election to the Superior Court of Santa Clara County. In 2001, she retired from the bench to become Vice Provost & Special Counselor to the President for Campus Relations at Stanford University. She left that position in 2009. In 2003, accepting no monetary donations, Judge Cordell ran a grassroots campaign and won a 4-year term on the Palo Alto City Council.

Judge Cordell was the Independent Police Auditor for the City of San Jose for five years (2010-2015). Under her leadership, the office gained national prominence. In 2016, Judge Cordell chaired a Blue-Ribbon Commission in Santa Clara County that investigated the jails in the aftermath of the murder of an inmate by jail guards; she also served on a Blue Ribbon Panel that evaluated the culture of the San Francisco Police Department after racist and sexist text messages surfaced.

In 2018, Judge Cordell was the voice of the opposition and campaigned vigorously against the recall of Judge Aaron Persky. Judge Cordell has been an on-camera legal analyst for CBS-5 television and a guest commentator on Court TV, MSNBC, CNN, as well as National Public Radio.

She is the co-founder of the African American Composer Initiative. ([www.aacinitiative.org](http://www.aacinitiative.org)).

Judge Cordell is a mother who lives in Palo Alto with her partner of 30+ years. In her spare time, Judge Cordell is a pianist, vocalist, portrait artist, and cartoonist. Her recently released memoir, *Her Honor*, a finalist for the California Book Award, is published by Celadon, a division of Macmillan Publishing.

## SPEAKERS, MODERATORS, AND CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS



**Dawn Dekle** is President and Dean of Thomas Jefferson School of Law. She has been President of three universities, including the American University of Nigeria, Orkhon University in Mongolia, and American University of Iraq. Prior to these appointments, she was Provost at the

American University of Afghanistan and Dean at S P Jain School of Global Management. She stewarded law programs during her time in both Iraq and Afghanistan, partnering with Stanford University, to bring Rule of Law and American-style legal education to both countries.

She has been a member of the project team that implemented multi-million dollar projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development, United States Department of Defense, World Bank, GIZ, UNHCR, WFP, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the Federal Government of Nigeria.

She has also held leadership positions outside of academia, and these include Council Member for the Singapore Institute of International Affairs and Leadership Specialist and Global Knowledge Manager with McKinsey & Company, where she was a member of the team that launched the McKinsey Center for Asian Leadership.

As a scholar of social science and law, she has published in academic journals, contributed book chapters, presented at international conferences, given keynote addresses for the Young Presidents Organization, and served as an analyst for BBC, Al Jazeera, and Channel News Asia about American strategies in Asia and the Middle East.

She has earned degrees in Psychology (B.S., Texas A&M University; Ph.D., Dartmouth College) and Law (J.D., Stanford University).



**Mikhak Ghorban** is the founder of Ghorban Law, APC, where she specializes in Immigration and Nationality Law. Born in Tehran, Iran, she moved to England as a young child before her family settled in San Diego, California. There, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and a Master's Degree

in Public Administration from San Diego State University. During graduate school, she worked with the San Diego County Probation Juvenile Division and later interned at the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington D.C., before returning to California to attend Western State College of Law.

Throughout her career, Mikhak has been dedicated to advancing diversity and gender equality. Since joining Lawyers Club in 2012, she has co-chaired various committees, including Membership Development, Diverse Women, Annual Dinner, and Law Student Outreach. She also served on the board of California Women's Lawyers as the Affiliate Governor for Lawyers Club. She is the first Iranian-American to serve on the Board of Lawyers Club and currently serves as its 2024-2025 President.

Mikhak is an active member of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Division of the San Diego County Bar Association (SDCBA) and serves on the board of Women of Color in Law. Additionally, she is on the advisory board of the Iranian American Bar Association-San Diego (IABA-SD), which honored her with the Community Impact Award in 2023 for her exceptional community service. Recently, the San Diego Business Journal named her one of its 2024 Women of Influence in Law. As one of the leaders working toward the establishment of the San Diego Unity Bar, she co-chaired its inaugural event.

Beyond her professional commitments, Mikhak volunteers with the Palomar Council PTA of the Poway Unified School District and at her children's school.





**Professor Emeritus Julie Greenberg** is an internationally recognized expert on the legal issues relating to gender, sex, sexual identity and sexual orientation. Her path-breaking work on gender identity has been cited by a number of state and federal courts, as well as courts in other countries. Her

work has been quoted in hundreds of books and articles and she has been invited to speak at dozens of national and international conferences on the subject. Her book, *Intersexuality and the Law: Why Sex Matters* provides an invaluable description, analysis, and critique of how people with an intersex condition are treated under existing legal regimes and was the recipient of the 2013 Bullough Book award for the most distinguished book written for the professional sexological community.

Professor Greenberg joined the TJSJL faculty in 1990 and was the Associate Dean for Faculty Development from 2003-2005. She has served on a number of nonprofit organizations' boards of directors and has also been involved in a variety of community service projects relating to the rights of women and sexual minorities. Professor Greenberg's work on behalf of LGBTI rights was recognized by the Tom Homann Association in 2006 when it presented her with the "Friend of the Community" award. She also was voted by her peers as one of San Diego's Top Attorneys in Academics for 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.



**Judge Nadia Keilani** was born in Baghdad, Iraq, and immigrated to the United States at the age of nine. She received her bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California, San Diego, in 1994 and her Juris Doctorate from the University of San Diego School of Law in 1997.

Judge Keilani worked in the Office of the Alternate Public Defender in the Juvenile Dependency Division before joining the San Diego Superior Court in 1999 as a Staff Attorney. During her time with the court, she worked in the criminal, family, civil and probate divisions. In 2019, Judge Keilani was appointed to the San Diego County Superior Court bench as a commissioner. In 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom appointed her Judge of the Superior Court.

Judge Keilani has volunteered with and helped lead numerous non-profit organizations over the course of her career, including the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, the Arab-American Advisory Board to the San Diego Police Department and the San Diego Arab Film Festival. She regularly conducts anti-bias training and enjoys mentoring law students. Currently, she serves as Vice President of the Middle Eastern North African Judicial Officers of California and as First Vice Chair of The United States Chapter of The Committee of Pan American Judges on Social Justice. She currently presides over a Juvenile Dependency department while also serving on the Appellate Panel of the San Diego Superior Court.



**Linda M. Keller** joined the TJSJL faculty in the fall of 2003. She recently returned to the faculty after serving as Dean from October 2018 – July 2024. She previously served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Vice Dean.

After graduating from Yale Law School, where she was notes

editor for the Yale Law Journal, she served as a clerk and supervisor in the Legal Research Office of the Connecticut Judicial Department. She then taught international human rights law and legal writing for four years at the University of Miami School of Law, where she also served as Fellow of the Center for the Study of Human Rights.

She has published on international criminal law and human rights in journals including the American University International Law Review. She served as a Visiting Professional at the International Criminal Court during the 2011-12 academic year, working in the Pre-Trial Chambers handling the Kenya cases.

Professor Keller is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation. She recently served on and chaired the Committee of State Bar Accredited and Registered Law Schools. She served on the Advisory Committee for the Public Interest Attorney Loan Repayment Program in 2023. She also served as a Director on the Defender Board (Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc. and Appellate Defenders, Inc) for several years. She currently serves as Secretary on the Board of Appellate Defenders, Inc. She is also a member of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Division of the San Diego County Bar Association and Lawyers Club.



Prior to her appointment, **Judge McCoy** was a Deputy City Attorney for the San Diego City Attorney's Office where she represented the City in a variety of civil litigation matters, including dangerous condition claims, civil rights actions, and state and federal statutory claims. Before joining the

City Attorney's Office, Judge McCoy served as the founding Director of the Thomas Jefferson School of Law Center for Solo Practitioners, a lawyer incubator program designed to help alumni start solo practices with a focus on access-to-justice and community service. In addition to the Center for Solo Practitioners, she led TJSJL's Epsten, Grinnell & Howell National Trial Team and taught Federal Evidence, California Civil Procedure, and Solo Practice Concentration. Before her work at TJSJL, Judge McCoy practiced civil litigation for 20 years with a focus on individual and class action consumer protection cases. She has tried matters to judges and juries and represented clients in judicial arbitrations, contractual arbitrations, and mediation hearings.

Judge McCoy also participates in a number of local and state bar organizations. She is a Past President of the San Diego County Bar Association, a Past President of Lawyers Club of San Diego, a Past Chair of the Conference of California Bar Associations and a Past Co-President of the Tom Homann LGBTQ+ Law Association. A Master in the Enright Inn of Court, Judge McCoy has been named a Super Lawyer, a Top Attorney by the San Diego Daily Transcript, a Top Attorney by San Diego Magazine, and a Woman of Achievement by California Women Lawyers. Judge McCoy has been a Workshop Leader for the San Diego Inn of Court Evidence and Trial Practice Programs since 2003. She served as President of the Inn in 2018 and currently serves on the Board.





**Judge Jinsook Ohta** is the first AAPI woman judge on the United States District Court for the Southern District of California. She is currently one of two Korean American federal district court judges in the country.

Judge Ohta obtained her B.A., magna cum laude and Phi Beta

Kappa, from Yale University in 1998 and then attended New York University School of Law on a full-tuition scholarship. She began her legal career as a law clerk for Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz in the United States District Court for the Southern District of California. After her clerkship, she worked as an associate at the law firms O'Melveny & Myers in Los Angeles and Sheppard Mullin.

After spending three years as a stay-at-home mother, Judge Ohta worked in the Consumer Protection Section of the California Attorney General's Office, first as Deputy Attorney General and then as a Supervising Deputy Attorney General from from 2011 to 2020. During this time, as lead trial attorney, she obtained a record-breaking \$343 million trial victory, the highest penalty awarded to date in a California consumer protection action, and won the Attorney General's Award for Excellence in Prosecution.

Prior to being appointed to the district court bench, Judge Jinsook Ohta served as a Superior Court Judge in San Diego County from 2020 to 2021.



**Kimberly Papillon** is a nationally recognized expert on the subject of decision-making in law, education, business and medicine. She has served as regular faculty at the National Judicial College since 2005. She has delivered over 600 lectures nationally and internationally on the

implications of neuroscience in the analysis of decision-making. She has lectured to medical schools and to over 5,000 physicians nationally and internationally on the neuroscience of decision-making in differential diagnosis and treatment. She has been appointed to the Georgetown University "think tank" for physician education. She has lectured to corporations including to Netflix, Google, Walmart, Clorox and Kaiser Hospitals nationwide.

She has provided presentations to the judges of the High Court of New Zealand, the Supreme Court of Victoria, Australia, the Canadian Judiciary, the Caribbean Association of Judicial Organizations, the Courts of Trinidad and Tobago and the Judiciary of Ukraine. She has presented to the U.S. National Council of Chief Judges of the State Courts of Appeal. She has presented to the U.S. District Court for the Southern and Eastern District of California, the United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit and the Tenth Circuit, and numerous other federal courts. She has delivered lectures to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States Department of Justice, United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the United States Department of Education, and the FDIC. She has provided lectures to the judiciaries of over 25 states including Alaska, North Dakota, New York, California, Idaho, Louisiana, Arkansas, Indiana, Tennessee, Utah, Nebraska, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Washington, Ohio, Arizona, Texas and New Mexico. She regularly lectures to attorneys in private firms and corporations. She lectures to state bar associations nationwide as well as prosecutors, public defenders and police officers throughout the U.S.

She has been appointed to the National Center for State Courts, National Training Team on implicit association in

judicial decision-making, a “think tank” for national judicial education. She has produced documentaries on neuroscience and judicial decision-making which have received national recognition. Her documentary on neuroscience and implicit association was made the centerpiece of the American Bar Association’s implicit bias education program for the Litigation Section.

Ms. Papillon is an attorney. She has a bachelor’s degree from U.C. Berkeley, a JD degree from Columbia University School of Law, and holds Certificates in Neuroscience and Cell Biology from Harvard University, in neuropsychology from Cambridge University as well as an Advanced Certificate in Genetics and Genomics from Stanford University.



### **Judge Paula S. Rosenstein**

was appointed to the bench by Governor Jerry Brown in November 2012. She was assigned to the Family Law Division for five years and during that time served downtown, South Bay and then in the central Family Law courthouse on 6th & Cedar until December

2017. At that point, she was assigned to the criminal division and is currently assigned to a criminal trial department.

In January 2020, in addition to the regular criminal trial department duties, Judge Rosenstein was assigned to preside over the Central Division Drug Court program and continues to do so as of today. In June 2021, she was asked to be the Supervising Judge for the Family Law Division, which covers 28 courtrooms doing a variety of assignments. In January 2024, she became the Lead Judge for the Collaborative and Mental Health Courts, a subdivision of the Criminal Division. She also was assigned to preside over the Re-entry Court Program and the newly formed CARE Act Proceedings.

A graduate of UC San Diego and USD School of Law, she was a civil litigator for more than 25 years. For the 15 years prior to her appointment, she was a shareholder in the law firm of Rosenstein, Wilson & Dean, P.L.C. focusing primarily on advisory and litigation matters related to employment law.

Outside of the courtroom, Judge Rosenstein has served on the Court’s ADR, SJO Investigations, Technology and Family Law Policy committees. She was one of the first co-chairs of the Court’s Anti-Bias and Legal Equality Committee (“ABLE”) and remained on that committee into 2023. She has also been a member of the National Association of Women Judges, the International Association of LGBTQ+ Judges, Lawyers Club of San Diego and other local bar associations. Prior to joining the court, Judge Rosenstein had been active in the San Diego legal community including with Lawyers Club of San Diego (past president, various committees, advisory board member) and Tom Homann LGBT Bar Association (past president and various committees). Judge Rosenstein, before being appointed, was an AV rated attorney, voted a Super Lawyer (employment law) in multiple years and a San Diego Top Lawyer.



**Judge Renee N.G. Stackhouse** is a judge of the Superior Court of California, County of San Diego. She currently sits as a Family Law Independent Calendar judge in North County. Prior to her appointment, she was a trial lawyer in private practice focusing on plaintiff-side personal injury and military defense.

She currently serves on the Thomas Jefferson School of Law Board of Trustees, Latinas in the Law, and is an active member of the National Association of Women Judges, chairing the Success Inside & Out program, co-chairing the Education Committee of the Annual Conference, and sitting on the Fairness & Equity and Ensuring Racial Equality in the Justice System Committees. She is a Past President of California Women Lawyers, the San Diego County Bar Association, San Diego La Raza Lawyers Association, and the Thomas Jefferson School of Law Alumni Association.

She graduated from Thomas Jefferson School of Law in 2008, magna cum laude.



**Judge Rohanee Zapanta** was appointed in 2018 by Governor Brown as the second Filipina American to serve as Superior Court Judge for San Diego County. She was recently awarded the Most Influential Filipina Women in the World by Filipina Women's Network in 2023. Judge Zapanta believes

in empowering students of diverse backgrounds through celebrating core values. She created and now co-chairs the youth project, Brown Faces to the Sun, featuring cultural pillars through hip-hop music. She co-chairs and co-founded the California Judges Association's Ethics & Wellness Workshops for first generation law students. She teaches workshops for Silayan Filipina's youth program and received their Legacy Award in 2023. Judge Zapanta also sits on the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Task Force for the University of San Diego Alumni Board of Directors. She is the current Managing Chief Editor of The Bench - the official journal of the California Judges Association where she regularly contributes a self-assessment column on identity and wellness.









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