

## Minority Bar Coalition Member Organizations:

Alameda-Contra Costa Trial Lawyers' Association  
Alameda County Bar Association  
American Constitution Society, Bay Area Lawyer Chapter  
Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area  
Asian American Criminal Trial Lawyers' Association  
Asian American Prosecutors Association  
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Silicon Valley  
Association of Latino Marin Attorneys  
Association of Lawyers with Disabilities  
Bay Area Black Prosecutors Association  
Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom  
Bar Association of San Francisco – Justice & Diversity Center  
Black Women Lawyers of Northern California  
Boalt Hall Women's Association  
California Association of Black Lawyers  
California Bar Foundation  
California Minority Counsel Program  
California Women Lawyers  
Charles Houston Bar Association  
Chinese American Lawyers of the Bay Area  
Consumer Attorneys of California  
Contra Costa County Bar Association  
East Bay Diversity Bar Coalition  
East Bay La Raza Lawyers Association  
Filipino Bar Association of Northern California  
Iranian American Bar Association  
Jewish Bar Association of San Francisco  
Korean American Bar Association of Northern California  
La Raza Lawyers Association of Santa Clara County  
Marin County Bar Association  
Marin County Women Lawyers  
National Asian Pacific Islander Prosecutors Association  
National Native American Bar Association  
Queen's Bench Bar Association  
San Francisco Intellectual Property Law Association  
San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association  
San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association  
San Mateo County Bar Association  
Santa Clara County Bar Association  
Santa Clara County Black Lawyers Association  
South Asian Bar Association of Northern California  
State Bar of California  
Thai American Attorneys of Northern California  
UC Hastings Legal Education Opportunity Program  
Vietnamese American Bar Association of Northern California  
Women Lawyers of Alameda County

[www.minoritybarcoalition.com](http://www.minoritybarcoalition.com)

Presented with  
UC Hastings Legal Education Opportunity Program

# 2017 Minority Bar Coalition Unity Awards

Tuesday, November 14, 6-9 PM  
UC Hastings Louis B. Mayer Lounge



*Keynote Speaker:*

The Honorable Benjamin T. Reyes II  
Judge of the Superior Court, County of Contra Costa

*Master of Ceremonies:*

Michael T. Nguyen



## ABOUT MBC AND THE ANNUAL UNITY AWARDS

The **Minority Bar Coalition (MBC)** is a network of over 40 diverse bar associations in the San Francisco Bay Area dedicated to working in a unified manner to advance the cause of diversity in the legal profession.

MBC does this by sharing best practices and resources in bar association programming and advocacy, finding issues of common cause, and building shared platforms.

The annual Unity Awards recognizes MBC members who have been exemplary in promoting the cause of diversity in our community.

### 2017 MBC Co-Chairs:

Lisa Mak

Catherine Ngo

Christine Start

Jason Yee

### BASF Board Liaisons:

Sigrid Irías

Danielle Ochs

### BASF Barristers Club Board Liaison:

Lauren Young Epstein



Find us on Facebook

[www.minoritybarcoalition.com](http://www.minoritybarcoalition.com)



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you for joining us and supporting our Minority Bar Coalition awardees!

Please visit our website [www.minoritybarcoalition.com](http://www.minoritybarcoalition.com) to connect with us, subscribe to our email list, and view all upcoming events. You can also submit an event for the Minority Bar Coalition calendar.

### Special Thanks To

Our Minority Bar Coalition Members and Sponsors  
UC Hastings Legal Education Opportunity Program (LEOP)  
Debbie Myers, LEOP Interim Associate Director  
3D-Forensic, Inc.



**Madhuri Nemali**

**South Asian Bar Association of Northern California (SABA-NC)**

Madhuri is an attorney at Cameo Law Group, an immigration law firm in San Jose. Previously, she was staff attorney at Apoyo Legal Migrante Asociado, an immigration law non-profit organization. She has also worked as a graduate fellow at the Santa Clara Law Katharine & George Alexander Community Law Center immigration clinic where she ran the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and as an attorney at the International Institute of the Bay Area. She has spent several years on the SABA-NC Board, including as President. A tireless advocate and supporter of the organization and the community, Madhuri helped mobilize attorneys for know your rights trainings and facilitated clinics for community members following the initial travel ban.

**Diane Luong**

**Vietnamese American Bar Association of Northern California (VABANC)**

Diane is an attorney at the Superior Court of Alameda, Self-Help Services since 2006, assisting customers with family law, small claims, guardianships, and general civil cases. Prior to working at the Superior Court, she worked as a staff attorney at Legal Assistance for Seniors and as an associate at a couple of small private firms. Originally from Garden Grove, Diane is a founding member and former Chair of the Board of the Vietnamese American Community Center of the East Bay (VACCEB) based in Oakland. Since 2009, Diane has dutifully served as the Chair of VABANC's Oakland Legal Clinic, a joint collaboration with Volunteer Legal Services Corp.

**Hon. Barbara Dickinson**

**Women Lawyers of Alameda County (WLAC)**

Judge Dickinson was appointed to a judgeship in the Alameda County Superior Court in November 2017 by Governor Jerry Brown. Prior to her appointment, she served as an Assistant Public Defender at the Alameda County Public Defender's Office from 2013 to 2017, and as Deputy Public Defender starting in 1989. During her 28-year tenure, Judge Dickinson served on the in-house training team conducting trainings on alternative dispute resolution for international attorneys and judges, as well as various evidentiary and criminal practice issues.

As President of WLAC, Judge Dickinson has overseen the creation of its new website designed to connect women in the legal profession with support, mentors, and information that strengthens careers. Additionally, she has worked extensively in the Juvenile Justice System, focusing most recently on a collaborative court system which treats mentally ill juvenile offenders. This touches a wide variety of communities and helps to address gaps in services for at-risk juveniles.

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

The Honorable Benjamin T. Reyes II



Appointed by Governor Jerry Brown in May 2017, Judge Benjamin T. Reyes II is the first Filipino American to serve as judge for Contra Costa County.

For most of his 24 years as an attorney, Judge Reyes managed a public agency practice. He was an Equity Principal at Meyers, Nave, Riback, Silver and Wilson since 2005, where he was an associate from 2001 to 2005. He served as General Counsel of Utility.com from 2000 to 2001 and as an attorney at the East Bay Municipal Utility District from 1997 to 2000.

Judge Reyes started his career in public law as a Deputy City Attorney at the San Jose City Attorney's Office in 1997. He was an associate at Boornazian, Jensen and Garthe from 1993 to 1997.

He was born in the Philippines and grew up in Honolulu and Alameda. He served in the U.S. Army Reserves from 1983 to 1987. He earned a B.A. degree from UC Berkeley and a Juris Doctor degree from University of San Francisco School of Law.

Judge Reyes is active in the Filipino Bar Association of Northern California and the Asian American Bar Association. He teaches on the faculty of the University of San Francisco School of Law Intensive Advocacy Program and volunteers as an instructor for the Trial Skills Program at Stanford Law School.

## 2017 UNITY AWARDEES

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### **Commissioner Toni Mims-Cochran Alameda County Bar Association (ACBA)**

Commissioner Mims-Cochran joined the bench in 2016. She started her legal career as a staff attorney for the Eviction Defense Center. She then ran her own solo practice for 14 years in Oakland, focusing on business litigation, family law, landlord/tenant litigation, and juvenile dependency trials and appeals. Commissioner Mims-Cochran is passionate about giving back. She is a past ACBA President and has been an active member of the legal community, serving as Co-Chair for the East Bay Diversity Bar Coalition, a member of the Charles Houston Bar Association, three term President of Women Lawyers of Alameda County, and Second Vice President of California Women Lawyers.

### **Palak B. Sheth**

#### **American Constitution Society, Bay Area Lawyer Chapter (ACS BALC)**

Palak proudly serves San Francisco as the Managing Director of the Affirmative Litigation Task Force at the San Francisco City Attorney's Office, where she manages the team charged with bringing cases against companies violating consumer protection laws. She also runs the internship program and oversees the partnership with Yale Law School's San Francisco Affirmative Litigation Project clinic. Palak previously worked at the American Constitution Society, where she focused on increasing awareness, education, and inclusion in their programs as well as encouraging more women and minorities to join the organization nationwide. Before that, she spent years advocating on behalf of the Asian Pacific American community with the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (APABA), APABA-DC Education Fund, and the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center .

### **Hung Chang**

#### **Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area (AABA)**

Hung is the director of product development and open source counsel at Harman International. Hung has been in the technology industry since 2005 and is very familiar with mobile applications, video games, social media, hosted services, professional video/audio products, digital content, and other enterprise offerings. Hung also serves as a volunteer legal counsel at Hyphen Magazine, a non-profit Asian American magazine. Hung has been actively involved with AABA since 2007 when he served as a co-chair of AABA's community service committee. He has served on the AABA board since 2010 and served as president from 2016-2017.

### **Kasie W. Lee**

#### **Asian American Criminal Trial Lawyers Association (AACTLA)**

Kasie runs a criminal defense and juvenile delinquency law firm in San Francisco. She serves on the Criminal Conflicts Panel and Juvenile Delinquency Appointments Panel, representing defendants in criminal cases and minors in delinquency cases who are not able to afford their own counsel. Kasie also works as the attorney administrator for BASF. She is a former deputy public defender of the LA County Public Defender's Office. Kasie serves as a board member and CFO of Pacific Juvenile Defender Center and is President of the AACTLA.

### **A. Jeanne Grove**

#### **Marin County Bar Association (MCBA)**

Jeanne is an attorney at Goldstein, Gellman, Melbostad, Harris & McSparran. Her primary practice areas are co-ownership and real property disputes, as well as landlord-tenant matters. In 2013, Jeanne received the California State Bar Real Property Section Morning Star award. In 2012-2014, she served as the American Bar Association (ABA) Young Lawyer Division District Representative for Northern California, representing 13 affiliates throughout the state. She also serves as an Adjunct Professor at her alma mater, UC Hastings, teaching legal writing, research, and oral advocacy skills. She is the Co-Chair of the MCBA Diversity Section delivering topical programs on inclusion, bias, and discrimination. Jeanne also launched a mentorship program bringing together Diversity and Barristers members. She is an active member of the Filipino Bar Association of Northern California and ABA.

### **Lois Prentice**

#### **Marin County Women Lawyers (MCWL)**

Lois founded Marin County Women Lawyers (originally North Bay Women Lawyers) in 1976 when there were very few women in the law and blatant sexism was rampant. Lois has remained an active member of the Board advocating for diversity on the bench, and working on issues such as domestic abuse and rape in the military. She is the current Chair of MCWL's Program Committee.

As a trial lawyer with a practice in Sausalito, Lois has handled numerous noteworthy matters, including first-degree murder trials, representation of Judge Francis McCarthy, filing an amicus brief resulting in the Supreme Court reversing its own ruling, and the divorce of Grace Slick, representing her husband Jerry. Lois often takes cases for worthy causes without pay. In 1974, Lois married environmental lawyer Zeke Grader.

### **Hon. Barbara O'Hearn**

#### **Queen's Bench Bar Association**

Judge O'Hearn has spent her career fighting for social justice and civil rights. She has been an attorney since 1980 and an Administrative Law Judge for the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board since 2007. She has devoted her practice to public interest and governmental law, working with the CA Department of Social Services, the Community Care Licensing Division, and as Deputy Director of the SF Rent Stabilization and Arbitration Board. Since 1987, Judge O'Hearn has served on the Queen's Bench Bar Association, Women Lawyers of Sacramento, Sacramento County Bar Association, and California Women Lawyers.

Judge O'Hearn has been a fierce advocate for the advancement of women and other minorities in the legal profession in general and in public service specifically. For the past 6 years, she has provided outstanding support to dozens of women lawyers as the Mentor Leader of the Queen's Bench Public and Government Law group. She is a true public servant and advocate for diversity in the legal field.

**Christine Mari Palma Start**  
**Filipino Bar Association of Northern California (FBANC)**

Christine is a Deputy Public Defender with the Solano County Alternate Public Defender. She proudly represents indigent individuals charged with crimes from arraignment through jury trial and post-conviction. During her tenure as President of FBANC, Christine founded and led the country's first-ever Pinay Powerhouse Conference, an inaugural women's conference focused on the empowerment of Filipina attorneys and aspiring attorneys as leaders in law.

Christine serves as FBANC Advisory Board member, National Filipino American Lawyers Association's Women Lawyers Network Co-Chair, MBC Co-Chair, USF Public Interest Law Foundation Advisory Board member, and Racial Justice Committee member at her place of employment. She is a certified professional life coach and a devoted yoga and social justice practitioner. Christine is a recipient of the Pursuit of Justice Award of her law school graduating class. In 2015, she was recognized with the Solano County Public Defender's Thurgood Marshall "Intricate Planner and Defender of the Poor" Award. In 2017, she was awarded the prestigious "Best Lawyers Under 40" Award by the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

**Elica Vafaie**  
**Iranian American Bar Association (IABA)**

Elica is staff attorney and program manager of the National Security and Civil Rights program at Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus. Elica previously helped establish the UC Undocumented Legal Services Center providing free immigration legal services and know your rights training to mixed status UC students and their families across California as the supervising attorney. She was the Project Director of the One Nation Initiative at the California Community Foundation (CCF) in Los Angeles where she managed the first philanthropic program in Southern California to support Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian community civic engagement, policy advocacy, as well as nonprofit capacity building. Elica also supported the Civic Engagement Department's efforts around immigrant integration and immigrant rights.

**Cody S. Harris**  
**Jewish Bar Association of San Francisco (JBASF)**

Cody is a partner at Kecker, Van Nest & Peters LLP. His tenacious case strategies, compelling briefs, and talent for persuasion safeguards his client's bottom line, reputation, and even their freedom. In addition to handling white collar, securities, appellate, and business litigation, he is a Stanford Continuing Studies Program constitutional law instructor. This year, Cody spearheaded an exceedingly successful JBASF fundraising campaign that raised more than \$160,000 to support the Southern Poverty Law Center in response to an "alt-right" rally in San Francisco.

**Matthew Ahn**  
**Korean American Bar Association of Northern California (KABANC)**

Matthew is a Senior Corporate Counsel in the litigation group at Oracle Corporation. In addition to managing a large docket of intellectual property and commercial disputes, Matt is involved with the affirmative licensing of Oracle's Java platform. Previously, Matt was an attorney with Morrison & Foerster, where he helped a client secure its billion dollar jury verdict in a landmark patent and trademark case relating to smartphones and tablets. Matthew was President of KABANC for the 2016-2017 term. Under his leadership, KABANC was able to hold one of the most successful annual galas for the organization. Matthew's focus on providing opportunities for younger attorneys and law students further expanded KABANC's mentorship program.

**Mark Punzalan**  
**Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Silicon Valley (APABA-SV)**

Mark is an Intellectual Property and Commercial Litigation attorney who advises companies and individuals primarily in trade secret disputes, trademark matters, and complex business disputes. He is an experienced litigator who has represented clients in federal and state courts nationwide. Prior to founding Punzalan Law, Mark represented clients in the areas of class action, securities, and whistleblower litigation at the San Francisco law firms of Finkelstein Thompson LLP and Berman DeValerio. Mark was selected as a Northern California "SuperLawyer" for SuperLawyers magazine in 2016 and 2017, and he was selected as a "Rising Star" in the magazine's 2015 edition.

**Richard Zitrin**  
**Bar Association of San Francisco – Justice & Diversity Center (BASF JDC)**

Richard has taught Legal Ethics since 1977 and since 1994 at UC Hastings where he currently teaches. He has authored three books and dozens of articles in the field. He founded and was the first Director of USF's Center for Applied Legal Ethics. He was coordinator of USF's ethics curriculum and also taught Trial Practice. He has taught ethics orientations around the country, including for several years at Fordham. Richard has also chaired the California State Bar's ethics committee; been awarded the ABA's Pro Bono Publico Award in 2006; continually remained in private practice, trying 50 cases to verdict; become a CA certified specialist in legal malpractice law in 2010; and been technical advisor to the film Class Action.

Richard has long been dedicated to making sure the legal community is diverse. He has championed BASF JDC's Bay Area Minority Law Student Scholarship program for decades, as a donor, a member of the awards committee, and a mentor to people of color in law school and beyond.

**Jennifer Orthwein**  
**Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom (BALIF)**

Jennifer transitioned from a career as a forensic psychologist to focus on legal and policy issues related to transgender and gender variant individuals, particularly those impacted by the criminal justice system. She helped launch and served as pro bono Senior Counsel for the Detention Project at Transgender Law Center. She assisted in the representation of two California prisoners, Michelle-Lael Norsworthy and Shiloh Quine. These cases were the impetus for access to gender affirming surgery and expression for transgender and gender variant people in California prisons.

Jennifer previously maintained a successful legal and psychological consulting practice providing expert witness services to attorneys. Her work focused on assisting attorneys representing transgender people involved in civil and criminal cases. Jennifer has co-authored publications related to practitioner liability in cases of suicide as well as gender bias in the California criminal justice system. She is also a co-principal investigator for the Transgender Research Consortium which aims to provide empirical evidence on the impact of discrimination on transgender people's physical and mental health and to use this data to provide recommendations to inform public policy, education, training, and clinical practice.

**Megan M. Lawson**  
**Black Women Lawyers of Northern California (BWLNC)**

Megan is an employment law attorney in Orrick's Silicon Valley Office. She defends companies in class action, multi-plaintiff and single plaintiff lawsuits under California and federal law on a variety of issues, including discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination claims and wage-and-hour matters. Most notably, Megan served on the trial team that resulted in the firm's resounding victory for venture capital firm Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers in the highly publicized gender discrimination lawsuit brought by Ellen Pao.

Megan also provides employment counseling to companies on a variety of employment issues and legislation. She has served on the Black Women Lawyers of Northern California Board in various capacities and gives back to her community through pro bono work.

**Shanae Buffington**  
**California Association of Black Lawyers (CABL)**

Shanae is an attorney at the California Employment Development Department in Sacramento. Prior to that, she worked for the Yolo County Public Defender's Office and Randolph, Cregger & Chalfant. Shanae serves as the Treasurer of the California Association of Black Lawyers and Secretary/Treasurer of the Sacramento County Bar Association (SCBA). She is also a past president of the Wiley W. Manuel Bar Association.

Shanae is the current Program Chair of SCBA's Kids Law Day, a program that provides an interactive experience to expose children in grades four through six to careers in the legal profession. Shanae's passion for diversifying the legal profession is evident through her work with CABL and SCBA.

**Deborah Moss-West**  
**Charles Houston Bar Association (CHBA)**

Deborah serves as the Executive Director of the Katharine & George Alexander Community Law Center at Santa Clara University School of Law. Prior to that, she served as their Director of the Center for Social Justice and Public Service. During her tenure at the Center she expanded the law school's pro bono programs, launched the Marshall-Brennan initiative and other pipeline programs, pioneered an undergraduate law and social justice class and pathway, and has been integral to building the Center and its reputation in the lawyering community.

Deborah brings many years of leadership experience, including eight years as Deputy Director of the East Bay Community Law Center, a clinical program of Berkeley Law. She serves on the State Bar's Access to Justice Commission and the Charles Houston Bar Association, where she received the President's Award in December 2015.

**Carol Leung**  
**Chinese American Lawyers of the Bay Area (CALOBA)**

Carol is an experienced in-house counsel specializing in commercial contracts and data privacy. She also supports the product and marketing teams on intellectual property, compliance, and general commercial and policy issues. Prior to law school, Carol was a software engineer at Microsoft. She was instrumental in developing CALOBA into the robust organization that it is today. Carol served as the President of CALOBA during 2015-2016.

**Micha Star Liberty**  
**Consumer Attorneys of California (CAOC) Diversity Committee**

Micha is a civil rights attorney specializing in litigating serious injury, civil rights, sexual abuse, consumer, and employment matters in both individual and class actions. She is a frequent lecturer and published author. Micha is also a tireless champion for diversity, who undertook the establishment of CAOC's Diversity Committee five years ago. She has continued to foster its growth. Micha "walks the walk" by perpetually advocating for inclusion and mentoring diversity community members to excel in legal and community leadership positions. Micha has become a role model for women in her profession. Besides making time for political causes, she gives back to the bar through several organizations – lecturing, writing, teaching, and governing.

Micha serves as the Second Vice President of CAOC. She has served or currently serves on the Alameda-Contra Costa Trial Lawyers' Association (past President), Alameda County Bar Association, American Association for Justice, Contra Costa County Bar Association, San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association, and Western Trial Lawyers Association. Aside from her thriving law practice, she is a certified mediator with over 40 hours of training and has performed private mediations as well as mediations for the Contra Costa Superior Court. Micha has also worked at the White House and for two Members of Congress.

**Arceli Martínez-Olguín**  
**East Bay La Raza Lawyers Association (EBLRLA)**

Arceli is the senior immigrants' rights attorney at Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA). She is building an immigrants' rights project focused on impact litigation and policy advocacy. Arceli has dedicated over a decade of her career to civil rights litigation, having worked at the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights; ACLU National, as a member of the Women's Rights Project and then the Immigrants' Rights Project; and at Legal Aid at Work. Arceli has also served as a lecturer at Berkeley Law and is the 2010 recipient of the Hon. Thelton E. Henderson Social Justice Prize. Before law school, Arceli taught bilingual kindergarten through Teach for America in Oakland, California, and is herself a Mexican immigrant.

Arceli is the President of the EBLRLA since September 2016. In addition to leading the planning and fundraising for our scholarship dinner, she launched a partnership with Centro Legal de la Raza to train EBLRLA members to volunteer to work with immigrant families around emergency planning. She also organized EBLRLA's inaugural Mujeres Committee event.