



Summer 2007

Judge Blackburne-Ridgsby Joins DC Appeals Court



Chief Judge Washington, Judge Blackburne-Ridgsby, Judge Rigsby and son Julian Rigsby.

On November 17, 2006, Judge Anna Blackburne-Ridgsby was sworn in as an Associate Judge on the D.C. Court of Appeals. In addition to her colleagues on the Superior Court and the Court of Appeals, a number of distinguished guests attended the investiture, including Mayor-Elect Adrian Fenty, members of the D.C. Council, the executive director and members of the International Association of Women Judges, deans from several area law schools, and Julian Bond, Chairman of the NAACP.

Remarks were offered by colleagues and friends in the community, including the Reverend Wallace Charles Smith of Shiloh Baptist Church, Michael Madigan of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, Professor

Patricia Worthy of Howard University School of Law and John Payton, of Wilmer Hale, LLP.

Judge Blackburne-Ridgsby was praised for her commitment to the community, civic activities, as well as serving as a coach and mentor for a Catholic Youth Organization girls basketball team.

Judge Blackburne-Ridgsby's husband, Associate Judge Robert Rigsby of the D.C. Superior Court, and their son Julian held a Bible while Chief Judge Washington administered the oath of office. Judge Blackburne-Ridgsby's mother, former New York State Supreme Court Justice Laura Blackburne, and her father, District Leader Elmer Blackburne, officially robed her.

Judge Bagneris to Chair Judicial Council



Judge Michael G. Bagneris was named 36th Chairperson of the Judicial Council during the 81st Annual Convention of the National Bar Association in Detroit, Mich. Judge Bagneris is a Civil District Court Judge of Orleans Parish, Louisiana. A 1972 graduate of Yale University, New Haven, Conn., where he majored in Afro-American History and American History.

He received the Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from Tulane Law School, New Orleans in 1975. Born in New Orleans, Judge Bagneris served as Executive Counsel to the Mayor of the City of New Orleans and was a practicing attorney with the firm of Waltzer & Bagneris before joining the bench.

Judge Bagneris serves on the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation.

Cleveland Municipal Court Judges Develop “Jail or School” Program

by Judge Pauline Tarver

Almost one year to the date of its launch, the Cleveland Municipal Court celebrated the first graduation class of its Get on Track program. “Get On Track” is a go to jail or go to school program which enables young men and women in becoming responsible adults and law-abiding citizens by helping them to realize and understand that education, employment, character development and possession of a valid driver license are necessary to being successful and having a productive lifestyle.

The “Get On Track” program requires defendants to meet with a Probation Officer, get a high school diploma, G.E.D. or occupational training certificate, document efforts to get a job until gainful employment is found. Requirements also include completion of a community work service project, attend group motivational sessions, establish long-range goals and wear appropriate attire to all court appearances and group session—shirt and tie for men and conservative dress or slacks for women and pay \$150.00 participation fee.

The first class of 40 young adults faced with traffic or misdemeanor offenses, either attained a high school diploma, G.E.D., occupational training certification, or completed a life skills program to take part in the ceremony February 24th at Cuyahoga Community College’s Metro Campus near downtown Cleveland.

After hearing remarks from several of the judges who played a role in forming the program, the grads heard from a hometown favorite, Hall of Fame Running Back Jim Brown.

“As most of you know, Rome is burning. Young people are killing each other in the streets. Most judges simply incarcerate, but *these* judges are giving people a second chance. This is

a great day ... this is history in the making.”

Brown’s Amer-I-Can program is one of the partners that make Get on Track possible. Also participating in the program: The Cleveland Municipal School District, Cuyahoga Community College, The Employment Connection and Court Community Service. The target population is young adults under 26

years of age charged with traffic or misdemeanor offenses and not on active probation with another court.

Along with Jim Brown, the judges, school officials, and Cleveland Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones all took part handing out certificates and diplomas.

“Some of the participants are on the express train, others are

on the local and a few have derailed and gotten back on track,” said the Congresswoman.

The Get on Track Program began in February 2006 and has produced a number of successes. Currently there are 211 active participants in the program, Twenty three (23) offenders have obtained full time employment, seventeen (35) have earned a GED or passed their pretest, four (4) are enrolled in vocational training, three (3) have enrolled in postsecondary education at Tri-C, forty six (46) have successfully completed the Amer-I-can life skills program, and eighty five (85) have completed eight hours of community work service.

The next Get on Track graduation is slated for August and the Honorable Emanuella Groves, co-founder of the program, is already excited.

“We have proof we’re making a difference. Now young men and women are becoming responsible adults and Get on Track is making them understand that education, employment and character development are essential to a successful and productive lifestyle.”



Atlanta Municipal Court Named for “Judges’ Judge”

The Municipal Court of Atlanta at 150 Garnett St. was rechristened the Lenwood A. Jackson Sr. Justice Center recently before a crowd of about 200 lawyers, judges and court personnel in honor of Jackson’s persistence and leadership in getting the facility built. Jackson served as a judge on the City Court of Atlanta from 1992 until his death in 2005.

Atlanta City Council members C.T. Martin and Jim Maddox co-sponsored the legislation for the courthouse’s re-

naming.

Jackson was one of three City Court judges who in 2001 sued the city of Atlanta, alleging it had diverted \$13.7 million from the court’s dedicated account to the city’s general fund. The judges won an order getting the money returned to the court and forcing the city to construct a new building for the City Court.

Jackson, who was born in Concord, Ga., graduated from Morris Brown College in 1966 and Emory Law School in 1969. He began his career with the

National Labor Relations Board in Los Angeles and then served as the general counsel for the Atlanta Housing Authority and as an attorney for the Atlanta Board of Education. He later became a partner at Patterson, Parks, Jackson & Howell, the law firm of the late Maynard H. Jackson Jr. He was appointed to the bench of the City Court of Atlanta by then-mayor Jackson.

“Lenwood Jackson was a judge’s judge. He treated you humanely. Even if he gave you six months, he made you feel



like it was in your best interest,” said Antavius Weems, the president-elect of the Georgia Alliance of African-American Attorneys, who organized the dedication ceremony.

82nd Annual NBA Convention!



The Gate City Bar Association Judicial Section looks forward to hosting Judges from all over the world in Atlanta at the Judicial Council Annual Meeting. We have planned a marvelous schedule of events and look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting!

The 82nd Annual Convention of the National Bar Association will be held in Atlanta, Georgia July 28 - August 4, 2007.

Hosted by the Gate City Bar Association the convention will feature the Eighth Quadrennial Black Congress on Health, Law & Economics. The Black

Congress on Health, Law & Economic Planning Committee, co chaired by Dr. Leslie Grant, National Dental Association and Judge M. Lynn Sherrod, Judicial Council of the National Bar Association, will present a working lunch on Saturday, July 28, 2007.



TRUE TRAILBLAZER!

Judge Jane Matilda Bolin

by Judge Ted Newman, St. Thomas, USVI

Judge Jane Matilda Bolin, America's first African-American woman judge died January 8, 2007; she was 98

years old. Judge Bolin was appointed to the Domestic Relations Court of New

York City on July 22, 1939 by Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia and served on that court—and its successor, the Family Court—until her mandatory retirement in December 1978.

Judge Bolin graduated from Wellesley College in 1928, the first African American woman to graduate from that school. In her senior year, she was named a Wellesley Scholar, a distinction given to the top 20 students in the class. She entered Yale Law School as one of three women and the only African-American. She was the first African-American woman to graduate from Yale Law School.

After a brief stint in private practice with her father, Gaius C. Bolin, Esq. in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and a period of practice with her husband, Ralph E. Mizelle, Esq., in New York City,

she was appointed an Assistant Corporation Counsel of New York City, the first African-American woman to hold such an appointment. She was as-

... *“how a lady judge should comport herself.”*

signed to handle cases in the Domestic Relations Court.

Judge Bolin's judicial career included cases involving homicides and other crimes committed by juveniles; non-support; neglect; children in need of supervision; adoptions; and paternity. She often chose not to wear judicial robes in order to make children feel more comfortable. Judge Bolin brought major changes to the Domestic Relations Court. For example, she assigned probation officers to individuals without regard to race or religion and insisted that private care agencies that received public funds accept children without regard to their racial or ethnic identity.

After her mandatory retirement because of age, Judge Bolin was a volunteer reading

instructor in the New York City schools and remained active in civil rights causes. She served on the National Board of the NAACP; the National Urban

League; the Children Welfare League; as well as a number of schools and rehabilitation cen-

ters for juveniles.

Shortly after Judge Bolin retired, Judge Constance Baker Motley, United State District Court for the Southern District of New York, described Judge Bolin as a “role model” saying that Judge Bolin always demonstrated “how a lady judge should comport herself.”

Judge Moore to Be Honored for Three Decades of Service

Judge Thelma Wyatt Cummings Moore will celebrate 30 years of judicial service October 26–28, 2007, in Atlanta, Ga.

Judge Moore was the first African American woman to serve on any state level court in the State of Georgia and has served on four benches, having been appointed originally by Mayor Maynard Jackson. Her judicial portrait will be unveiled on Friday, October 26.



Moore

Judicial Tidbits

□ The Judicial Council has once again commissioned *Who's Who Publishing Company* to publish **Black Judges In America** – Third Edition. The book is expected to be available at the 82nd Annual Convention of the National Bar Association in Atlanta, Ga., July 28–August 4, 2007. The book will retail at the convention for \$39.95. The **DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IS FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 2007**. Submit photograph (black and white or color) and biographical data (300 words or less) to: Who's Who Publishing Company, 1650 Lake Shore Drive, Suite 250, Columbus, Ohio 43204 or electronically editorial@whoswhopublishing.com.

□ Governor Jennifer Granholm has selected **Chief Judge Leo Bowman** of the 50th District Court to be the newest Oakland County Circuit Judge replacing the retiring Judge Tyner. He has distinguished himself as a Past President of the Michigan District Judges Association, Michigan Governor of the American Judges Association, Director of the Oakland County Bar and in so many other community endeavors as well as his performance on the bench. Judge Bowman was first elected to the 50th District court in 1988, and re-re-elected in 1994, 2000 and 2006. In 1998, he was appointed Chief Judge. Prior to his election, he served as the first Legislative Auditor (Legal Advisor) to the Pontiac City Council and as Deputy City Attorney for the City of Pontiac. He is a graduate of Oakland



Bowman

University and the University Of Detroit Law School. As Chief Judge of the 50th District Court, He has strived to make the court system more efficient and responsive to the community. Working with the Pontiac Chief of Police, the Mayor and the city council, he initiated the "Fast Track" Domestic Violence Program and founded the Drug Awareness Foundation to fund Pontiac school drug education programs. He often interacts with local community and school groups and encourages the other judges in his district to do the same.

□ The United States Virgin Island Commission on the Status of Women has inducted **Judge Eileen Petersen** into the Virgin Island Hall of Fame.

Eileen Petersen, retired Judge of the Virgin Islands Territorial Court, was the first woman to serve as a Judge in the United States Virgin Islands (1971-1994). She is a graduate of Hampton University, Hampton, Va., and Howard University School of Law, Washington, D.C. A former school teacher, she is admitted to practice law in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands. She serves as the first commissioner of the Casino Commission.



□ **Husband and Wife Winners:** Former North Carolina **Chief Justice Henry Frye** and **Shirley Frye** received the 2006 Justice Award, American Judicature Society's highest distinction. Justice Frye served as Chair of the AJS Board of Directors from 1995 to 1997. He was the first African-American to be elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives and the first to serve on the Supreme Court of North Carolina. Shirley Frye is a civic activist and community volunteer. Both Fryes were instrumental in the establishment of the AJS Institute of Forensic Science and Public Policy in Greensboro.

Mid-Year Meeting of the Judicial Council



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