

Mission & Goals

The Women's Section has been a strong presence in CCCBA for over 25 years and welcomes men and women practicing in all areas of the law who work or live in Contra Costa County.

The goal of the section is to further the advancement of women in the legal profession and the judiciary. To do so, the Section offers frequent networking opportunities, such as "Power Lunches" and happy hours, MCLE classes with notable and relevant speakers, and fundraising and community events, such as the Honorable Patricia Herron and Honorable Ellen James Scholarship, and an annual Awards Dinner.

For membership information, please contact Jennifer Comages, Membership Director for the Contra Costa County Bar Association via email at jcomages@cccba.org.



Women's Section

Contra Costa County Bar Association

FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Fall 2020 Women's Section Newsletter!

IN MEMORIAM



The Women's Section of the CCCBA Honors Feminist and Cultural Icon, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

"To make life a little better for people less fortunate than you, that's what I think a meaningful life is. One lives not just for oneself but for one's community."

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg

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The Board of the Women's Section of the CCCBA mourns the passing of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a feminist and cultural icon who died on Friday, September 18, 2020. Her legacy and commitment to justice and equality for all will forever live on in our minds and in our hearts.

Justice Ginsburg was a champion and fierce advocate for women's rights and equality. An early pioneer who paved the way for women like us to attend law school and become attorneys, Justice Ginsburg challenged and shattered traditional notions of women's roles in American society. Through her groundbreaking civil rights work as a trailblazing litigator, to her many years serving as an incisive jurist, Justice Ginsburg spent her life fighting to ensure that all people were given equal protection under the law. A warrior for gender equality, Justice Ginsburg spent nearly three decades on the highest court in the land, never straying from her unwavering belief that equal justice under the law only truly existed if it applied to every single American.

When Justice Ginsburg spoke, people listened. That is why she became a cultural icon — the "Notorious RBG". Even when she fell in the minority on the bench, she oftentimes ultimately won by persuading lawmakers to use her powerful dissenting opinions as support to pass laws, such as the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. Her inspirational dissents served as constant reminders and warnings of the potential consequences of some of the majority opinions, whether it be issues concerning adequate protection of voting rights or the argument that women's rights are human rights.

Justice Ginsburg's personal life is also inspirational. Despite graduating first in her class, she couldn't get a job at a law firm because she was a woman. Instead of lamenting over this, Justice Ginsburg devoted her efforts to educating others. She became a professor at Rutgers Law School and Columbia Law School, teaching civil procedure as one of the few women in her field. Later joining the Women's Rights Project of the ACLU, Justice Ginsburg argued some of the most important civil rights cases before the Supreme Court, helping to establish precedent that has been relied upon in many subsequent civil rights cases since their establishment. She was later appointed a judge, and in 1993, was nominated by President Bill Clinton to sit on the Supreme Court. For many – children and adults alike – Justice Ginsburg's story has served as an endless motivation to push forward and fight for your dreams; to never give up and to not be afraid to push the boundaries.

In addition to her invaluable role as a civil rights activist, Justice Ginsburg was also a devoted mother and wife, who espoused equality in her own marriage. While adjusting to her first year of law school, Justice Ginsburg took care of her ailing husband and their child, taking class notes for him and doing whatever she could for her family. A mother herself,

she challenged the stereotype that only the mother should be responsible for their children when they are sick or have a problem at school.

Justice Ginsburg's life and work will continue to serve as inspiration for generations to come. Her friendship with the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia proves that while you may disagree with someone's political views and ideals, you can still be friends and maintain your respect and integrity. She carried herself with poise and grace while acting as a relentless advocate for the less fortunate. Bravely and courageously fighting medical problems in her later years, including several bouts of cancer, Justice Ginsburg never skipped a beat going to work, vowing to continue her life's mission through it all. We hope that each and every one of us can live up to the example that has been set by Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

As no one could say it better than the Notorious RBG herself, we leave you with some of our favorite quotes from Justice Ginsburg:

1. "When I'm sometimes asked 'When will there be enough (women on the Supreme Court)?' and my answer is: 'When there are nine.' People are shocked. But there'd been nine men, and nobody's ever raised a question about that."
2. "My mother told me to be a lady. And for her, that meant be your own person, be independent."
3. "Women will have achieved true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation."
4. "Dissents speak to a future age. It's not simply to say, 'My colleagues are wrong and I would do it this way.' But the greatest dissents do become court opinions and gradually over time their views become the dominant view. So that's the dissenter's hope: that they are writing not for today, but for tomorrow."
5. "We are at last beginning to relegate to the history books the idea of the token woman."
6. "Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time."
7. "So often in life, things that you regard as an impediment turn out to be great, good fortune."
8. "Reacting in anger or annoyance will not advance one's ability to persuade."
9. "When a thoughtless or unkind word is spoken, best tune out."
10. "Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."
11. "You can't have it all, all at once."
12. "I'm a very strong believer in listening and learning from others."
13. "In the course of a marriage, one accommodates the other."
14. "In every good marriage, it helps sometimes to be a little deaf."
15. "A gender line ... helps to keep women not on a pedestal, but in a cage."

16. "If you want to be a true professional, do something outside yourself."
17. "Reading is the key that opens doors to many good things in life. Reading shaped my dreams, and more reading helped me make my dreams come true."
18. "Don't be distracted by emotions like anger, envy, resentment. These just zap energy and waste time."
19. "You can disagree without being disagreeable."
20. "If you have a caring life partner, you help the other person when that person needs it. I had a life partner who thought my work was as important as his, and I think that made all the difference for me."
21. "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception."
22. "I would like to be remembered as someone who used whatever talent she had to do her work to the very best of her ability."

Thank you, Justice Ginsburg, for all that you did and for all that you will continue to do through the inspiration of your life and the spirit of your words. Rest in peace. Rest in power.

** The Women's Section has signed onto a letter written by the Lawyers Club of San Diego and addressed to Governor Gavin Newsom requesting that the State of California declare a holiday in honor of Justice Ginsburg. More to follow as this develops.*

CHANGES TO OUR BYLAWS

In an effort to keep the important conversation going on how our Women's Section can be an ally to diversity, equity and inclusion, we have amended our bylaws as redlined below:

ARTICLE II PURPOSES

The purposes for which this Section is formed are:

- (a) To further the interests of women in the legal profession and the judiciary;
- (b) To stimulate interest in and encourage discussions regarding legal and social issues of concern to

women;

(c) To promote a spirit of mutual support, cooperation and service and to foster social contacts among the Members of the Section;

(d) To offer scholarships and support to deserving law students who have shown leadership potential, achieved academic success, and helped to advance women's issues;

(e) To promote diversity, equity and inclusion; and

(e)(f) To extend our network of contacts and support of women's interests through affiliation with California Women Lawyers.

SCHOLARSHIP

The Women's Section annually awards the Honorable Patricia Herron and Honorable Ellen James Scholarship to deserving law students who have shown leadership potential, achieved academic success, and helped to advance women's issues. The section hosts a scholarship fundraiser each spring, usually in the form of a silent auction and wine-tasting. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, we were unable to host this event.

We gratefully accept donations to the Scholarship Fund anytime and would like to thank the following sponsors who have donated to the scholarship this past year, and are gracious enough to allow us to apply these donations towards the scholarship we are planning to aware in the Spring next year.

Brown Gee & Wenger
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Law Office of William Schott
McKenna|Brink|Signorotti LLP
Melissa Baldwin Settlements
Mora Employment Law
Morrill Law
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BOARD MEMBER FEATURE

- Introducing our newest Board Members Ritzi Lam and Jennifer McGuire, both from Morrill Law.

Jennifer McGuire is a Partner at Morrill Law. Ms. McGuire's practice focuses on trust and estate litigation, financial elder abuse actions, contested conservatorships, removal and surcharge actions, and related litigation, including civil claims and employment disputes with caregivers. Jennifer has significant experience in all stages of disputes, including counseling clients prior to litigation, representing clients at mediation, and through trial. Ms. McGuire has tried matters in multiple Bay Area courts, including a two-week jury trial in San Francisco County resulting in a six-figure verdict for her client, and a two-week bench trial in Santa Clara County involving an oral contract claim against an estate resulting in a complete defense verdict and an award of costs.

Ms. McGuire graduated from the University of San Francisco School of Law and obtained her Bachelor of Arts from the University of California, Berkeley.

Ms. McGuire has been selected to the Super Lawyers® Rising Star list by her peers for seven consecutive years. Ms. McGuire has presented to professional groups, including the East Bay Trusts and Estates Lawyers and Legal Assistance for Seniors, on topics related to estate and trust litigation, financial elder abuse, and conservatorships.

Her main hobby is running. She is a member of the running club, She Runs This Town; and she enjoys running everything from local 5Ks to marathons. She is currently training for the NYC Marathon, which she will run virtually in honor of a friend.



Ritzi K. Lam focuses her practice in the areas of probate, estate and trust administration, and conservatorships. Ritzi's estate planning experience includes drafting both complex and routine plans, which include preparing irrevocable trusts and utilizing closely-held family partnerships and corporations, to help meet strategic goals associated with estate planning. Ritzi advises clients on federal tax law and IRS regulation compliance issues regarding estate, gift, and income tax matters; and has negotiated with the IRS on behalf of clients. She represents clients in contested estate, trust, and probate matters.

Ritzi served as a Judicial Extern for Presiding Justice David G. Sills of the California 4th District Court of Appeal and as a volunteer research attorney for The Honorable George Miram of the California Superior Court, Probate Department. She is fluent in Cantonese Chinese.

Her favorite hobbies are hiking, traveling, and fostering cats.

WOMEN'S SECTION DONATION

Thank you for your support and input on where to donate in furtherance of our commitment to assist and support marginalized communities. The vote was very close, but the winner is the National Coalition of 100 Black Women – Oakland/Bay Area Chapter (NCBW-OBAC). The NCBW-OBAC provides programs that increase the participation of African American women in economic, civic, entrepreneurial, and human service arenas of their respective communities through education, scholarship, and collaboration. We have donated \$500 to the NCBW-OBAC on behalf of the Women's Section.

UPCOMING SECTION EVENTS

ApPEERing Productive

This collaboration workshop on productivity techniques for full-time work from home parents will be led by Sarah Tetlow of Firm Focus on Wednesday, October 21, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.

This workshop encourages peer collaboration on challenges and successes that lawyers and busy professionals (who are also parents) have experienced since full-time remote work and parenting began in March. This workshop encourages peer collaboration on challenges and successes that lawyers and busy professionals (who are also parents) have experienced since full-time remote work and parenting began in March.

During the workshop, we will discuss:

- How to improve sleep, work/life balance, email management, and personal and professional goals.
- A simple and effective daily exercise that anyone can implement to ensure they stay motivated, productive, and thriving.
- Strategic, practical, and applicable tips and techniques to improve productivity. Sometimes the best productivity hacks come from those who are similarly situated.

This program encourages the attendees to share their challenges, and their successes, to help others improve their practice and their lives overall. Sarah from Firm Focus will provide additional techniques, tips, and strategies to support healthier habits.

Upcoming Book Club

The next book club meeting will be in November. We will be reading The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas. Date and zoom details: TBA.

ODDS & ENDS



Wine glasses for sale! The Women's Section is selling our signature stemless wine glasses for the low price of \$5 each! All proceeds go to our scholarship fund. Contact us at ccbawomenssection@gmail.com to place your order today!

FEEDBACK

Please send event ideas or any information and feedback about the Section to us at ccbawomenssection@gmail.com.

We hope you have enjoyed the Fall 2020 Women's Section Quarterly Newsletter and that you will stay safe, healthy and sane.