

## **THE HONORABLE BRENDA F. HARBIN-FORTE (Ret.)**

*Judge of the Alameda County (California) Superior Court (7/98 - 11/19)*  
*Judge of the Oakland-Piedmont-Emeryville (California) Municipal Court (1/92 - 7/98)*  
Admitted to California Bar in November 1979

### **PRE-JUDICIAL EMPLOYMENT:**

- **Thelen, Marrin, Johnson & Bridges**, Oakland, CA & San Francisco, CA (Partner, 1990-1992; Associate, 1984-1989): General and complex civil litigation in state and federal courts.
- **Harris, Alexander & Burris [& Culver]**, Oakland, CA (Associate, 1982-1984): General civil litigation and criminal defense in state and federal courts.
- **Moore & Bell**, Oakland, CA (Law Clerk, 1978-1979) General civil litigation and criminal defense in state and federal courts
- **Legal Aid Society of Alameda County**, Oakland, CA (Law Clerk, 1977-1978)

### **CLERKSHIP:**

- **U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit**, San Francisco, CA  
(Court Law Clerk, 1979-1982; Assistant Calendar Attorney, 1980-1982; Special Assignment to the Chambers of Judge Dorothy W. Nelson Summer 1981 and Summer 1982)

### **EDUCATION:**

- **Berkeley Law School/Boalt Hall School of Law, University of California**, Berkeley, CA (J.D., 5/79): Class ('79) President (elected office); Co-Director, Appellate Advocacy; Moot Court Board; Vice-Chair, ASUC Judicial Committee
- **University of California**, Berkeley, CA (B.A. in Rhetoric, 6/76): Member, Honor Students Society; Graduation Speaker at Departmental Graduation Ceremonies

### **APPOINTMENTS:**

- State Bar of California Commission on Judicial Nominees Evaluation (2021-2024)
- City of Oakland Mayor's Appointee Oakland Police Commission (July 2020-June 2023)
- City of Oakland Screening Panel for 2020 Redistricting Commission (Jan - July 2020)
- State Bar of California, Council on Access & Fairness, Chair (2007-2008; 2019-2020); Chair of Judicial Committee (2007-2011; 2017-2018); Member (2007- 2011; 2016-2020)
- Judicial Council of California's Science and the Law Steering Committee, (2005-2008)
- State Bar of California's [Diversity] Pipeline Task Force, Chair, Courts Working Group (2005-2007)
- Judicial Council of California (1996-1999; Chair, Rules & Projects Committee, 1998-1999)
- Planning Committee, CJER Continuing Judicial Studies Programs (1995-1998)
- U.S. District Court - Northern District Civil Justice Reform Act Committee (1991-1992)
- Alameda County Superior Court Settlement Commissioner (1990-1992)
- State Bar Litigation Section, Executive Committee (1990-1991)
- Alameda County Trial Court Delay Reduction Act, Local Rules and Oversight Committees (1987-1990)
- U.S. District Court Merit Selection Panel (for retention of a magistrate judge) (1986)
- Oakland Residential Rent Arbitration Board (1986-1989)
- Alameda County Fish & Game Advisory Commission (1986-1987)
- State Bar Committee on Administration of Justice (1984-1987)

### **PUBLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS:**

- Consultant, Judicial Council Committee on Providing Access and Fairness "Judicial Diversity Tool Kit" (2011 and 2019)
- Consultant, California Judges Benchguide: "Adoptions" (CJER, 2005 - 2009)
- Consultant, California Judges Benchguide: "Preliminary Hearings" (CJER, 1999 - 2009)

- Consultant, California Judges Benchguide: “Landlord-Tenant Litigation” (CJER, 1998 - 2009)
- Consultant, California Judges Benchbook: Civil Proceedings - Before Trial (CJER, 1995 – 2016)
- Consultant, California Judges Benchbook: Civil Proceedings - Trial (CJER, 1997 - 2016)
- Consultant, California Judges Benchbook: Civil Proceedings - After Trial (CJER, 1998 - 2016)
- Consultant, California Judges Benchbook: Discovery (CJER, 1998 - 2015)
- Consultant, California Judges Benchbook: Juvenile Court Administrative Deskbook (CJER, 2003)
- Consultant, California Trial Objections, 2d Edition (CEB, 1995)
- Consultant, Jefferson’s Evidence Benchbook, 3d Edition (CEB, 1997, 2011-Present), Chapter 35 – “Evidence of Character, Habit and Custom”
- Author, “African-American Women on the California Bench: A History” (Daily Journal, March 26, 2019)
- Op-Ed, “Advice to Trial Judges and Judge Wannabes” (Daily Journal, January 7, 2012)
- Op-Ed, “Pioneer Spirit” (Daily Journal, March 5, 2007.)
- Co-Author, “A Court-Appointed Special Advocate: Changing A Foster Child’s Life” (The [Alameda County Bar Association] Bulletin, October 2001)
- Author, “350 Days to Trial: Strategies For Survival Under Trial Court Delay Reduction Programs” (CEB Special Supplement, Spring, 1988)
- Author, “Unfair Media Coverage of Judicial Misconduct Investigations (Or Taking Landmark Communications Too Far),” (The San Francisco Attorney, Aug/Sep, 1987 ed.)
- Author, “Black Women Pioneers in the Law,” (The Historical Reporter [a publication of the Historical Society of the U.S. Dist. Ct, Northern Dist. Of CA], Spring 1987 edition)

**JUDICIAL AND LEGAL EDUCATION FACULTY EXPERIENCE AND INVOLVEMENT:**

**Judicial Council/California Center for Judicial Education and Research (“CJER”)**

- Dean, B.E. Witkin Judicial College (2000 - 2002; Associate Dean, 1998-2000)
- Chair, New Judge Education Planning Committee (2000 - 2002; Vice Chair, 1998-2000)
- Faculty: *Basic Civil Law Courses (Landlord/Tenant; Minor’s Compromise, etc.)* (1994); *Civil Law Update* (Municipal Courts Institute, 1994-1995); *Civil Settlement Techniques* (B.E. Witkin Judicial College, 1996-2001); *Common Evidence Problems* (Civil Procedure Institute, 1992); *Consumer Law* (Civil Procedure Institute, 1997; Judicial College & CJSP, 1994-1997); *Criminal Law Overview* (CJSP, 2006-2008); *Defaults and Dismissals* (Judicial College, 1996-1998); *Genetics and the Courts* (Judicial College, 2001); *Genetics, Ethics, and Social Responsibility* (Genetics in the Courtroom Conference, 1999); *How to Make Your Court User Friendly* (CJSP 1993); *Juvenile Dependency* (Judicial College, 2002, 2003); *Marsden & Faretta* (Judicial College, 2005); *Negligence/Proposition 51* (CJSP, 1995; Civil Procedure Institute 1994); *Overlaps: But I Thought I Was a Civil Judge!* (CJSP 2005); *Pathways to the Bench* (Various Programs, 2019-2020); *Poverty Simulation Workshop* (Various programs, 2019-2020); *Preliminary Hearings* (Judicial College, 2007, CJSP 2008; Online Course 2010); *Techniques in Judicial Education* (CJSP 1997); *Urban Judges Roundtable* (1993);
- Planning Committee Memberships: Municipal and Justice Courts Institute [Chair] (1994) ; Municipal Courts Institute (1995); Continuing Judicial Studies Program (1995-1998); “Genetics in the Courtroom” Conference (1999); Civil Law Institute (1996)
- Seminar Leader, Judicial College (1995)
- Fairness in the California Courts (Trained as Instructor)
- Judicial Council Liaison to CJER Governing Committee (1997 - 1998)

**Alameda County Bar Association**

- *Strategies for Eliminating Bias in the Legal Profession* (2011, 2012)
- *Winning Strategies in Settlement* (2017)

**California Judges Association- Faculty**

- *Poverty Simulation Workshop (2018 Annual Meeting)*
- *If I Had Known Then . . .* “ (2017 Mid-Year Meeting)
- *Justice in the Balance: The 2020 Report* (1994 Annual Meeting)

**Continuing Education of the Bar (“CEB”) – Faculty**

- *Analyzing Key Evidence Issues: The Jefferson Approach* (1998)

### Foundation for Judicial Education

- Board Chair, 2023-Present; Member 2022)

### Hastings College of Law, San Francisco, CA - Faculty

- Adjunct Professor/Legal Writing and Research Instructor (1983-1984; 1981-1982)

### National Bar Association

- Education Committee Co-Chair and Faculty, 2016 Mid-Year and Annual Meetings
- Bail Reform (2018)
- Innocence Projects and Wrongful Convictions: Lessons for Judges (2019)

### National Institute of Trial Advocacy Faculty

- Faculty, Western Regional Program (1990)

### National Judicial College, Reno, NV Faculty

- Drug Courts: The Judicial Response (1997 [Team Leader]; 1996)

### Practising Law Institute Faculty

- *Strategies for Eliminating Bias in the Legal Profession* (2011, 2016) ; *Diversity Pipeline: State Bar Diversity Pipeline Project* (2006)

### The Rutter Group Faculty

- Enforcing Debts and Judgments (1997)

### The State Bar of California Faculty

- Numerous courses on Diversity in the Legal Profession/Judicial Diversity (2006-present)
- Chair, Planning Committee, Judicial Diversity Summits presented in 2006 and 2011, and Member, Planning Committee for Judicial Diversity Summit presented in 2016

### University of the South Pacific School of Law, Suva, Fiji

- *Removing Gender and Racial Bias in the Legal Profession - California's Experience* (2012)

### **DISTINCTIONS, HONORS, AND AWARDS:**

- Distinguished Service Award, Judicial Council of California, 2022
- Hall of Fame Award, California Association of Black Lawyers (CABL), 2022
- Chair's Special Recognition Award, Judicial Council of CABL, 2022
- Crystal Gavel Award, Judicial Council of the California Association of Black Lawyers, 2020
- Champion of Diversity, 2021 Unity Award, Minority Bar Coalition and CABL
- Special Lifetime Achievement Award, Charles Houston Bar Association, 2019
- Multicultural Bar Alliance of Los Angeles Award, 2018
- Alba Witkin Humanitarian Award, California Judges Association/California Judges Foundation, 2016
- Spirit of Excellence Award, American Bar Association, 2014
- Diversity Award, State Bar of California, 2013; Commendation for Diversity Work, 2016
- Hall of Fame Award, Charles Houston Bar Association, 2012
- Woman Jurist of Distinction Award, Women Lawyers of Alameda County, 2012
- Distinguished Service Award (Judge of the Year), Alameda County Bar Association, 2012
- Judicial Excellence Award, Charles Houston Bar Association, 2008
- Champion of Unity Award, Minority Bar Coalition, 2007
- Bernard S. Jefferson Judge of the Year Award, California Association of Black Lawyers, 2007, 1994
- Rose Bird Memorial Award, California Women Lawyers, 2007
- Benjamin Travis Community Service Award, Charles Houston Bar Association, 2006, 1991
- President's Award, California Women Lawyers, 2005
- Unsung Heroines Award, Oakland Bay Area Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc., 2005

- Wilmont Sweeney Juvenile Court Judge of the Year Award, Juvenile Court Judges of California, 2003
- Outstanding Jurist Award, National Bar Association, Women Lawyers Division, 2002
- Ella Hill Hutch Award, Statewide, Black Women Organized For Political Action/PAC, 2002
- Outstanding Achievement Award, Black Women Lawyers of Northern California, 2000
- First African-American woman selected as Dean and Associate Dean of California's Judicial College
- President's Award, Charles Houston Bar Association, 1994
- "Judge Brenda Harbin-Forte Day" declared in City of Oakland on November 19, 1992
- Woman of the Year Award, Oakland Business & Professional Women, 1992
- Nat'l Black Law Students Association's Tribute to Black Women in the Legal Profession, 1988
- An Outstanding Young Woman of America, 1983
- Argued two cases before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, both resulting in published opinions
- First African-American woman President of the Alameda County Bar Association
- First African-American woman to clerk for the Central Staff of the Ninth Circuit
- First African-American woman elected Berkeley Law School (formerly Boalt Hall) Class President
- Delivered a commencement address at high school, college, and law school graduations

#### **CURRENT MEMBERSHIPS/AFFILIATIONS:**

- Alameda County Bar Association (President, January 1-24, 1992 (term ended on appointment to the bench on January 24, 1992); President-Elect, 1991; Board member, 1990; Chair and Vice-Chair, Law Day Committee, 1995 & 1994; Member, Drug Task Force, 1995; Co-Chair, Legislature Liaison Committee, 1988-1989)
- American Bar Association
- Bernard E. & Alba Witkin Charitable Foundation (Vice President, 2016 - ; Board Member, 2015- )
- Black Women Lawyers Association of Northern California (President, 1986)
- California Association of Black Lawyers (Vice President, North, 1987-1989; Judicial Advisor-North, 2006-2014; 2017-Present); President's Special Assistant [Judicial], 1992-1997)
- California Judges Association 1992 - present (Chair, Annual Meeting Planning Committee, 2015-2016; 2022-2023; Co-Chair, Judicial Education Committee, 2006-2008)
- California Women Lawyers (Judicial Liaison and Board Member, 1998 – 2005 [Presented numerous "So, You Want to be a Judge?" programs]; District 3A Governor, 1989-1990)
- Center for Youth Development through Law (Board Member and Leadership Council, 2010 - )
- Charles Houston Bar Association (Executive Board Member and Newsletter Editor, 1988)
- Foundation for Judicial Education (Board President 2023 – Present; Member 2022)
- Judicial Council of the California Association of Black Lawyers (1992-Present; Chair, 2019-2020; Treasurer, 2020-Present and 1993-1997); Co-Chair-North (2017-2018); Producer, Membership Directory, 2005 - )
- National Association of Women Judges
- National Bar Association (Judicial Council, 1992-Present; Co-Chair, Judicial Council Education Committee, 2015-2016; Board of Governors, 1987-1988; Asst Regional Director, Region IX, 1987-1988)

#### **PAST MEMBERSHIPS/AFFILIATIONS:**

- Alta Bates Medical Center (Community Member, 1993; Associate Trustee, 1994-1996)
- American Bar Foundation, (ABF Fellow, 1993-1996)
- Boalt Hall Alumni Association Board of Trustees (1998 -2000)
- Business & Professional Women, Oakland
- East Oakland Youth Development Center (Board Member, 1985-1986)
- Edward J. McFetridge American Inn of Court (Master, 1993-1995; Membership Chair, 1994-95)
- Juvenile Court Judges of California (a section of the CJA) Executive Committee, 2000 - 2004
- The Judge Patricia Ann McKinley Memorial Foundation, (Founding Board Member), 1986-1987
- McClymonds High School Law & Government Academy, (Advisory Board; Donald P. McCullum Youth Court Board, Honorary Chair)
- National Association of Negro Business & Professional Women
- Oakland Certified Development Corp. (Board Member, 1988)

#### **PERSONAL:**

Born in Meridian, Mississippi; One child; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild