

JUDICIAL DIVISION

Standing Committee on Minorities in the Judiciary



One of the great strengths of America as we would like it to be (as perceived by the optimists among us) is its racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. In simplest terms, we are referring principally to whites (of various ethnicities and religions), African Americans (Blacks), Hispanics (Latinos), Asian Americans (Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, and Native Americans (American Indians), and Native Americans (American Indians).

We celebrate the richness of our diversity. We used to boast of the great 'melting pot' which presupposed that we would merge our identities into an amorphous American Model. The passage of time has taught us the fallacy of that concept. We now believe that we can be distinctly American, but still maintain our cultural history, language, music, and identity."

*Justice Charles Z. Smith, Retired
Washington State Supreme Court*

2008 Midyear Meeting Highlights



Celebrating Diversity on the Bench

By: Michael Bergmann, Lawyers Conference

The Standing Committee on Minorities in the Judiciary (SCMJ) hosted a reception to celebrate and promote a diverse judiciary as part of the 2008 Mid-Year meeting. Hosted by McGuire Woods LLP at their offices in Century City, Los Angeles, ABA Members were joined by local members of the bench and bar and firm representatives, including Managing Partner, David Van Et ten; Business Development

Manager, Megan Weinsten; and Partners, Tracy Evans Moyer, Sidney Kanazawa and Mark Suzumoto.

Local Los Angeles Superior Court Judges, the Honorable Allen Webster (also a SCMJ member) and the Honorable Cynthia Loo, helped to make the reception an outstanding success. Loo, a member of the Judicial Division, also serves on the Board of Governors of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Asian Pacific American Women Bar Alliance and the Women Lawyer's Association of Los Angeles. Other notable attendees included the President of the National Bar Association, Vaneta Banks; the Honorable Bernice Donald, Secretary-Elect of the ABA; Nicole Bershon, President of the Women Lawyer's Association; and Patrick Ashouri, Past-President of the Iranian American Lawyer's Association.

The SCMJ Co-chairs, Gloria Wilson Shelton and Honorable G. Michael Witte, greeted reception attendees. They outlined the work of SCMJ on promoting diversity on the bench as well as that of the Judicial Division's Judicial Clerkship Program, providing an intensive clerkship experience during the ABA Mid-year meeting for minority law students. Judicial Division Chair, the Honorable James Wynn, underscored the importance of diversity on the bench and thanked McGuire Woods for generously hosting the reception in their new offices. Sid Kanazawa, chair of the firm's LA office Diversity Committee echoed the importance of diversity in the profession and of McGuire woods' commitment to that important ideal.

Thirteen photographs depicting the diversity of judges in the Los Angeles Superior Court conveyed the progress toward judicial diversity on a pictorial level at the reception. This special exhibit is part of a larger exhibit, "Judicial Portraits," by photographer and Administrator for Community Relations for the Los Angeles Superior Court, Camilo Cruz.

CAPTION: Los Angeles Superior Court Judges Kelvin Filer and Allen Webster appear in one of the photographs from the collection by Camilo Cruz.

Michael G. Bergmann is a member of the Standing Committee on Minorities in the Judiciary and the Executive Committee of the Lawyers Conference. He is the director of the Chicago-based Pro Bono Initiative.