

Pathways to the Bench



Friday, June 8, 2024

11:30 am - 5:30 pm

Milton Marks Conference Center, Lower Level
455 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco

SPEAKER BIOS

Pathway to the State Court Bench

Speakers:

Hon. Tracie L. Brown, Justice, California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Presiding Justice, Division Four

Luis Céspedes, Judicial Appointments Secretary

Chhaya Malik, 2024 JNE Commission Chair

Claudia Vetesi, Chair, BASF Judiciary Committee

Hon. Russell Roeca, Judge, Superior Court of San Francisco

Moderator:

Terrance J. Evans, Partner, Duane Morris, Vice-Chair of CLA

Speaker Bios

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Hon. Tracie L. Brown

Justice, California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Presiding Justice, Division Four



Hon. Tracie L. Brown, Justice, California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Presiding Justice, Division Four

Justice Tracie L. Brown was appointed to the First District Court of Appeal by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., in November 2018. She served as an Associate Justice in Division Four until January 2023, when Governor Gavin Newsom appointed her to the position of Presiding Justice of Division Four.

Before her appointment, Justice Brown served for five years on the San Francisco Superior Court, where she presided over a wide variety of criminal cases, including the Domestic Violence Court. She was also twice elected to the Superior Court's Executive Committee.

Justice Brown graduated Phi Beta Kappa and *magna cum laude* from Harvard University in 1992. After working in Japan, she received a J.D. from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law in 1996. After law school, Justice Brown clerked for Judge M. Margaret McKeown on the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. She worked as an associate for Morrison & Foerster LLP and Cooley LLP before joining the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of California. As an Assistant U.S. Attorney, Justice Brown tried numerous civil and criminal cases and argued several cases before the Ninth Circuit.

In 2002, Justice Brown received the California State Bar's Jack Berman Award for Distinguished Service to the Profession and the Public, based on her extensive work on a *pro bono* case representing San Francisco's Japanese American community. In 2003, she received the Asian American Bar Association's Joe Morozumi Award for Exceptional Legal Advocacy. In 2013, Judge Brown was honored with a United States Department of Justice Director's Award for her work on a successful trial involving a massive online "pill mill," through which three defendants unlawfully distributed millions of doses of controlled substances.

In addition, Justice Brown has taught trial advocacy at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law and Stanford Law School, and she has served as a mentor and frequent speaker for the Asian American Bar Association and the Bar Association of San Francisco.

Luis Céspedes

Judicial Appointments Secretary



On December 10, 2020, Luis Céspedes was sworn in as Governor Gavin Newsom’s Judicial Appointments Secretary. Secretary Céspedes was born in Santa Maria, California and at the age of 15, went on strike with the United Farm Workers during their early struggle for better wages and working conditions for farmworkers. He earned a scholarship to Occidental College in Los Angeles, receiving both his B.A. and M.A. degrees.

Prior to attending U.C. Berkeley School of Law, Secretary Céspedes participated in the prestigious CORO Foundation Fellowship Program which provides unique training in public affairs. Secretary Céspedes has served as Administrative Assistant and Co-Chief of Staff to former Assemblymember Vic Fazio, Principal Consultant to the Assembly Health Committee and Senior Consultant to the Assembly Office of Majority Consultants under the leadership of the late Speaker Leo McCarthy. Secretary Céspedes was in private practice since 1982, as a solo practitioner and partner with Céspedes, Namba & Nakagawa in Sacramento. He has served the Sacramento County Superior Court as a Pro Tem Settlement Conference Judge, Pro Tem Juvenile Court Referee, and court appointed judicial arbitrator.

In 1987, Secretary Céspedes co-founded the renowned Unity Bar Association of Sacramento. He was named “Distinguished Attorney of the Year” in 2018 by the Sacramento County Bar Association, and was included in the Daily Journal’s roster of “Top 100 Lawyers” in 2021. He has served on numerous boards and commissions, including as commissioner and chair of the Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Commission, a joint city/county agency focusing on providing housing for very low and moderate-income families.

He has been married to Laurel Montoya Céspedes for 50 years and they have three daughters and six grandchildren.

Chhaya Malik

2024 JNE Commission Chair



Chhaya Malik is the Chair of the Judicial Nominee Evaluations Commission for the 2024-2025 term. Appointed by the State Bar Board of Trustees, JNE is charged with thoroughly investigating and evaluating candidates under consideration for appointment by the governor to California judgeships. Separate from this very important public service, Chhaya is the Deputy Director of Dispute Resolution Division (“DRD”), within the California Civil Rights Department (“CRD”). There Chhaya is responsible for managing DRD which is a key part of California’s efforts to directly address and resolve civil rights disputes by providing mediation services for complaints filed with the CRD.

Prior to joining the CRD, Chhaya served as Special Counsel at Ramsey & Ehrlich spearheading investigations into misconduct as well as defending individuals in enforcement actions brought by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and other governmental authorities. Prior to that, Chhaya served as the interagency policy lead at the United States Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and as a litigator at Hogan Lovells LLP. She also served as the Thurgood Marshall Fellow at the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area and as counsel at the Advancement Project working on matters related to voting rights, race discrimination, and poverty law.

Chhaya received her J.D. from U.C. Berkeley (Boalt Hall) and received her undergraduate degree from U.C. Berkeley, with Highest Honors in Business Administration. While in law school, she worked on the appellate team of a death row inmate through the Death Penalty Clinic of the U.C. Berkeley School of Law. Before law school, Chhaya worked as a financial analyst in mergers & acquisitions at Goldman Sachs.

Claudia M. Vetesi

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Claudia focuses her practice on the defense of consumer class actions and on complex commercial litigation, including unfair business competition, false advertising, product liability, and privacy matters. She is currently representing numerous consumer goods manufacturers and retailers in false advertising and mislabeling class action lawsuits. Claudia also regularly counsels clients in the food, cosmetics, retail, and technology industries. She represents companies in false advertising disputes before the National Advertising Division (NAD) of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc.

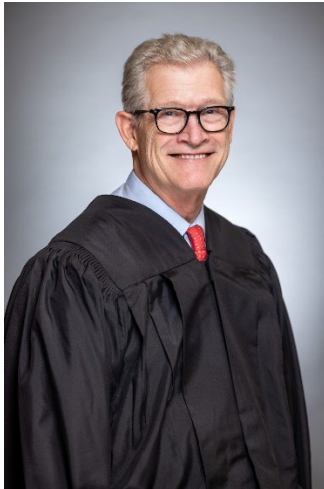
Claudia is active in MoFo's pro bono efforts, and recently traveled to El Paso, Texas, to work with families separated and detained at the border. She is also supervising a pro bono collaboration with Equal Rights Advocates, a nonprofit fighting for gender justice in work places and schools across the country. The initiative will help students who have been victims of sexual assault, attempted assault, or harassment find support and seek justice. Claudia is also a board member of Bay Area Legal Aid and a former board member of Equal Rights Advocates.

Claudia is an editor and frequent contributor to MoFo's [Class Dismissed](#) blog, which provides reports about the latest defense news, developments, and trends in class action lawsuits and product liability issues that affect consumer-facing companies. Her perspectives are also respected in the larger legal community: Claudia has published articles about class action and false advertising issues, and is a co-author of Chapter 7 — "Unfair Competition in California Business Litigation 2016" — of *The Recorder*. She also regularly speaks at conferences on class action and advertising trends.

Claudia is currently serving as a Lawyer Representative for the Northern District of California through 2023, and is a member of the American Inns of Court. She received her J.D. degree in 2004 from Berkeley Law (Boalt Hall School of Law), where she was an associate editor of the *Berkeley Technology Law Journal*.

Hon. Russell S. Roeca

Judge, Superior Court in San Francisco



Russell S. Roeca is a judge in the San Francisco County Superior Court. He was appointed by Governor Newsom in 2020. Judge Roeca currently serves on the statewide Executive Committee of the California Judicial Mentor Program (CJMP).

During the 20 years prior to his judicial appointment, Judge Roeca was a partner in Roeca Haas Montes De Oca LLP, a boutique San Francisco firm. Prior to starting the Roeca Haas firm, Judge Roeca was a partner in Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP and before that, he worked as an associate for several different firms.

Judge Roeca's commitment to diversity in the legal profession, including the judiciary, is as long as his career. He began volunteering his time and energy to work on diversity issues as soon as he graduated from law school in the early 1980's. His volunteer work has focused largely on ensuring equal opportunity for members of the LGBTQ community. He served on the Board of Governors for the national LGBTQ rights group, the Human Rights Campaign, from 1994 to 1998, and has been a longstanding member of Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom.

Judge Roeca also served as president of the Bar Association of San Francisco in 2009 and has won numerous awards including the State Bar of California's 2010 Myer J. Sankary Lawyer of the Year award, Small & Solo Firms and the 2011 Bench Bar Coalition Leader of the Year award.

Judge Roeca was born in Hollywood, one of five sons, to a screenwriter dad and a mom who was one of just three women in her 1946 USC law school graduating class. He has been married to his husband, Rich Vernon, for more than forty years—and maintaining the legal right to that marriage has been quite a journey.

Terrance J. Evans

Partner, Duane Morris; Vice-Chair, California
Lawyers Association



Terrance J. Evans is a Partner in the San Francisco and Los Angeles offices of Duane Morris LLP, where he serves as the Co-Leader of the firm's [Banking and Financial Services](#) Practice. Mr. Evans is also the Co-Chair of the Duane Morris San Francisco Diversity and Inclusion Committee. His practice is focused on representing clients in federal and state trial and appellate courts across the United States including the United States Supreme Court. Mr. Evans also regularly counsels clients regarding racial justice and diversity and inclusion issues. He has led dozens of diversity trainings for judges, lawyers, law students, and members of the community around the United States.

Mr. Evans is the Immediate Past President of the Charles Houston Bar Association, the oldest Black Bar Association in California. He is the Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the CLA Racial Justice Committee; Immediate Past Chair of the Litigation Section of the California Lawyers Association; Co-Chair of the American Bar Association ICLC Diversity & Inclusion Committee, Member of the Bar Association of San Francisco Judicial & Finance Committees; Director of Region IX of the National Bar Association, and he is the first Black man elected to serve as a statewide representative on the Board of the California Lawyers Association. Mr. Evans is Vice Chair of the CLA Board of Representatives. Mr. Evans has spoken at more than 180 diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and civil rights programs in partnership with more than 65 law schools, bar associations, colleges, universities, high schools, law firms, churches, and other organizations. Mr. Evans also frequently appears on national and local television and radio discussing issues ranging from the United States Supreme Court and California courts to important legislation and civil rights issues.

In 2016, Mr. Evans was honored by the National Bar Association as one of the top African American attorneys in the USA under age 40. In 2017, he was honored by the Charles Houston Bar Association for his work promoting diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. In 2018, Mr. Evans was honored by the Minority Bar Coalition for his contributions to promoting diversity and inclusion throughout California. In 2019, Mr. Evans was honored by New Dawn Vallejo for his work

promoting diversity and inclusion and pro bono legal services. In 2020, Mr. Evans was recognized by Chambers for his efforts to promote diversity and inclusion throughout the United States. In 2021, Mr. Evans was honored by the Bar Association of San Francisco and Justice and Diversity Center for his diversity and inclusion work in Northern California and throughout the United States. In 2021, Mr. Evans was also honored by American Lawyer Magazine as a Trail Blazer.

In 2022 and 2023, Mr. Evans was honored by the Los Angeles Times as being one of the foremost leaders on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in the State of California. In 2022, Mr. Evans was also honored by the Minority Bar Coalition for a second time for his efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the United States. In 2024, Mr. Evans received the Cunningham Award from the California Association of Black Lawyers for his efforts to promote DEI throughout the United States. During his legal career, Mr. Evans has raised more than \$500,000 for scholarships for underprivileged students. Mr. Evans has also created five annual scholarship that have provided tens of thousands of dollars to under privileged students in the Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and LGBTQ Communities.