



# HERSTORY

*in the Law*

CELEBRATING THE IMPACT OF  
BLACK WOMEN LAWYERS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024

5:30 PM  
LIVE ON ZOOM

[virgilhawkinsnba.com](http://virgilhawkinsnba.com)





VIRGIL HAWKINS FLORIDA CHAPTER  
NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION  
EXECUTIVE BOARD  
2023 - 2024

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



**ROGER L. JOHNSON**  
**PRESIDENT**  
**VIRGIL HAWKINS FLORIDA CHAPTER**  
**NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION**

Dear VHFCNBA Members, Friends, and Guests,

As we gather to celebrate Women's History Month under the theme "HERstory in the Law," I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable legacy of women leaders within our esteemed organization. This month, we not only honor the indelible contributions of Black women to the legal profession but also commemorate a significant milestone – 50 years since the installation of our first female president, State Senator Arthenia Joyner.

Senator Joyner's trailblazing leadership paved the way for countless women in our organization and beyond, inspiring them to strive for excellence and equity in all their endeavors. We owe a debt of gratitude to her unwavering dedication and vision.

I would like to extend utmost appreciation to our Event Chair and Vice President, Brendalyn Edwards, for organizing this momentous celebration.

I am also deeply thankful to our esteemed panelists – Judge Nancy Abudu, Tiffani Lee, Burnadette Norris Weeks, and Chanel Rowe – for offering their invaluable insights and reflections during our "Celebrating the Impact of Black Women Lawyers" panel discussion. I am sure that your expertise and experiences will enrich our understanding of the challenges and triumphs faced by Black women in the legal profession.

Furthermore, it is with great pride that I congratulate the inaugural recipient of the Senator Arthenia L. Joyner Public Service Award, Florida State Representative Fentrice Driskell. Representative Driskell's historic achievement as the first Black woman to lead the Florida House Democratic Caucus exemplifies the spirit of service and leadership that defines our organization.

The Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association, founded in 1955 by a group of African-American lawyers dedicated to fighting injustice, remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing justice and empowering communities across our state. Through our collective efforts, we continue to provide resources, support, and networking opportunities to legal professionals, ensuring that the legacies of the trailblazing women we honor this evening endure for generations to come.

As we reflect on the achievements of women in the law, let us recommit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and equality for all. Together, we can build a future where the contributions of women are recognized, celebrated, and valued in every aspect of society.

Thank you for joining us in honoring HERstory in the Law.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CELEBRATION CHAIR



**BRENDALYN EDWARDS**  
**VICE PRESIDENT**  
**VIRGIL HAWKINS FLORIDA CHAPTER**  
**NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION**

Dear VHFCNBA Members and Future Members:

I am thrilled to extend a warm welcome to you as we come together to celebrate the immeasurable contributions and achievements of Black women lawyers. As we commemorate Women's History Month, it is essential to recognize and honor the invaluable role that Black women have played in shaping the legal profession and our broader communities.

*HERstory in the Law* is not just a celebration; it is a moment of reflection, empowerment, and solidarity. It is an opportunity for us to come together to uplift one another and to amplify our voices. Throughout history, Black women have been at the forefront of social change, breaking barriers, and defying expectations with little recognition. From the courageous activists who fought for civil rights to the visionary leaders who have transformed industries, Black women have left an indelible mark on every aspect of our lives.

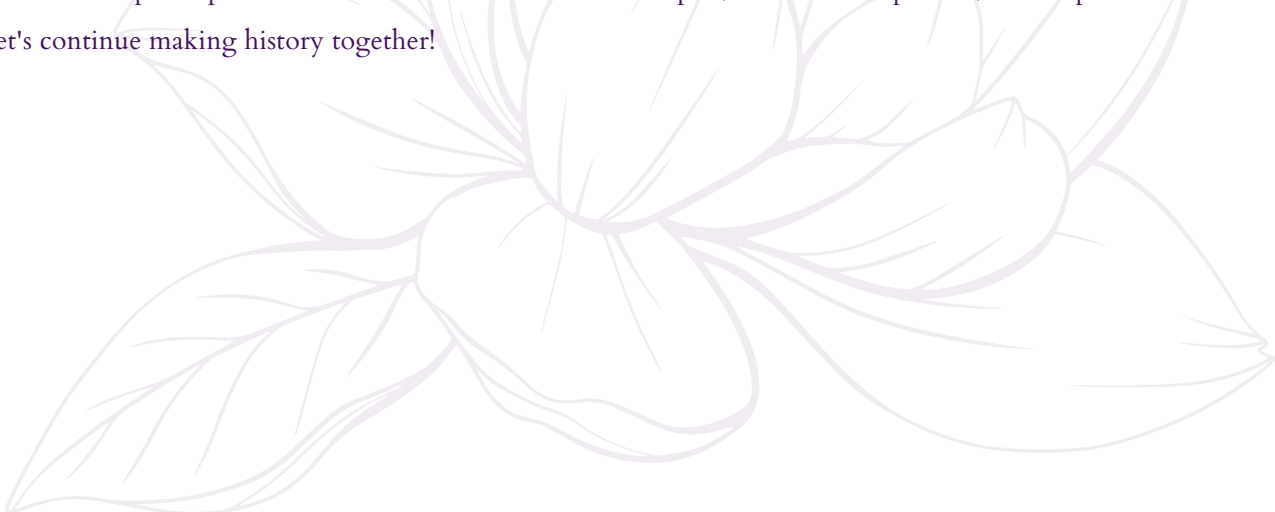
Today, we celebrate and honor the remarkable Black women who have not only held the prestigious position of President of Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association, but who have also been influential leaders in our communities. These indomitable women have shattered glass ceilings, paved the way for future generations, and made significant contributions to our profession. Their dedication, resilience, and commitment to justice have left a lasting impact, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps. By showcasing their achievements and highlighting their accomplishments, we pay tribute to their roles in shaping history and driving positive change.

We are also taking the time to embrace the power of our collective stories. I extend my deepest gratitude to our trailblazing panelists—Judge Nancy Abudu, Tiffani Lee, Burnadette Norris Weeks, and Chanel Rowe—for being willing to share their triumphs and challenges. May their stories inspire us to recommit ourselves to the pursuit of equality, justice, and empowerment for women. Together, let us continue to break barriers, defy expectations, and leave an enduring legacy of excellence.

Congratulations to the Inaugural recipient of the Senator Arthenia L. Joyner Public Service Award, Florida House Minority Leader Fentrice Driskell, who embodies the example of servant leadership set by Senator Joyner.

Thank you all for being here today to honor the strength, resilience, and brilliance of Black women everywhere. Your presence and participation are instrumental as we honor our past, celebrate our present, and shape our future.

Let's continue making history together!





ORDER OF PROGRAM  
**HERSTORY IN THE LAW**  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024

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WELCOME & OCCASSION

BRENDALYN EDWARDS

VICE PRESIDENT

VIRGIL HAWKINS FLORIDA CHAPTER NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

HONORING VIRGIL HAWKINS FLORIDA CHAPTER NBA'S  
50-YEAR LEGACY OF WOMEN LEADERS

ROGER L. JOHNSON

PRESIDENT

VIRGIL HAWKINS FLORIDA CHAPTER NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION OF SEN. ARTHENIA L. JOYNER

PRESENTATION OF INAUGURAL SEN. ARTHENIA L. JOYNER  
PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

PANEL DISCUSSION

“CELEBRATING THE IMPACT OF BLACK WOMEN LAWYERS“



**HONORING VIRGIL HAWKINS FLORIDA CHAPTER  
NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION'S  
50-YEAR LEGACY OF WOMEN LEADERS  
1974 - PRESENT**

1974-1976

**SEN. ARTHENIA L. JOYNER**

1988-1989

**DIANNE S. GAINES**

1992-1993

**EVETT L. SIMMONS**

1994-1995

**LYNN D. SOLOMON**

1995-1996

**MONIQUE M. EDWARDS**

1996-1997

**V. LYNN WHITFIELD**

1997-1998

**ALLISON K. BETHEL**

2002-2003

**AVA L. PARKER**

2003-2004

**VERONICA VALDEZ**

2005-2006

**BARBARA J. PITTMAN**

2007-2008

**KALINTHIA R. DILLARD**

2008-2009

**RACHELLE R. MUNSON**

2010-2011

**DEANA H. INGRAHAM**

2011-2012

**SHA'RON JAMES**

2012-2013

**HON. ARAMIS D. AYALA**

2014-2015

**KAMILAH L. PERRY**

2016-2017

**ANTONYA K. JOHNSON**

2017-2018

**ASHLEE A. POUNCY**

2018-2019

**LASHAWNDA K. JACKSON**

2022-2023

**VALERIA I. OBI**



1974-1976

## SEN. ARTHENIA L. JOYNER

**SENATOR ARTHENIA L. JOYNER** has been a pioneer and political trailblazer throughout her impressive career. A graduate of Florida A&M University College of Law, she was Florida's fifth Black female lawyer, the first Black lawyer in Polk County and the first Black female lawyer in Hillsborough County. Joyner was the first female member & first female president of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association (formerly known as Lambda Epsilon Chi Legal Fraternity). Joyner has practiced law for fifty-four years, longer than any Black woman in the history of Florida. Joyner was the first Black female lawyer to serve on the board of the Hillsborough County Bar Association, first Black appointed by a Governor (Gov. Lawton Chiles) to the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority, the first Black woman appointed to the Board of Directors of the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce, the first Black female State Representative and State Senator elected from Tampa. She is of Counsel at Swope Rodante PA in Tampa FL, practicing in personal injury.

In 1960, while an 11th grade student at Tampa's Middleton High, she participated in her first civil rights demonstration, the sit-ins at F.W. Woolworth, an event that would shape her entire life. As a college student at Florida A & M University, she was arrested twice in 1963 for civil disobedience and spent 14 days in Leon County Jail. When president of the National Bar Association (1984-85), she was arrested for protesting apartheid outside of the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C. In 1964, she graduated with a B.S. in Political Science from Florida A & M University and in 1968 earned her J.D. from Florida A & M University College of Law.

Joyner entered politics in the early '70s when she chaired in Tampa, Shirley Chisholm's presidential campaign, Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns, co-coordinator of Lawton Chiles' 1990 gubernatorial campaign, and Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign. Joyner was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2000, and the Florida Senate in 2006. In 2014, her colleagues elected her to serve as the first Black woman to lead the Senate Democratic Caucus.

Senator Joyner's awards include appointments by President Clinton to the U.S. Delegation to the International Population and Development Conference in Cairo, Egypt (1994) and the U.S. Delegation to the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, China (1995); the naming of a library in her honor by the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners; Leadership Florida's Leroy Collins Life Time Achievement Award; and being named as one of Florida Trend's Top 500 influentials in Florida in the legends category.



1988-1989

## DIANNE S. GAINES

**DIANNE SAULNEY GAINES** was born in segregated Louisiana where she earned a bachelor's degree in 1962 from Xavier University and began her first career as an educator. Suffering a disparate wage system for black teachers, Gaines developed a passion to become a lawyer to seek justice in housing, education, and wherever else inequality existed. She relocated to Miami, FL to attend law school at the University of Miami. As a law student, Gaines was president of the University of Miami's Black American Law Students Association. She was admitted to practice in 1980 and joined the Dade County Attorney's Office, where she was responsible for public finance, HUD/Community Economic Development, and commercial litigation. In 1990, she assembled a diverse and broad-based team of lawyers to join her successful campaign to be elected as the first Black lawyer to the Florida Bar Board of Governors.

Gaines also chaired the Southern District of Florida's Judicial Nominating Commission that yielded the appointment of Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr. to the federal bench. Her passion for challenging injustices led to her writing an amicus brief on behalf of Haitian refugees. From 1985 to 1987, Gaines served as the founding president of the Gwen S. Cherry Black Women Lawyers Association (previously the National Bar Association Women Lawyers Division Dade County Chapter). She is also a past president of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association. Her husband was the late Ernest J. Gaines, the acclaimed author of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and *A Lesson Before Dying*. She is the mother of four children, two of whom are lawyers.



1992-1993

## EVETT L. SIMMONS

**EVETT L. SIMMONS** is a graduate of Florida Southern College (B.A., 1979) and received her law degree from the Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University (J.D., 1982). She received an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from Suffolk University (2001). Ms. Simmons concentrates her practice in estate planning as well as probate and guardianship administration and litigation. She also practices corporate law with an emphasis in franchising. Admitted to practice law in Florida, Ms. Simmons serves as Managing Partner for the Firm.

Ms. Simmons has been active in numerous professional associations. In 2000, she was installed as the 58th President of the National Bar Association ("NBA"). In that role, she was instrumental in creating the NBA Crump Law Camp and the Evett L. Simmons Mock Trial Competition for high school students, which continues today. Other professional organizations in which she is involved includes the American Bar Association where she chaired the President's Advisory Council on Diversity in the Profession, served on the Diversity Center and served on the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession. She served two terms as chair of the Continuing Legal Education Committee of The Florida Bar, is a Life Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and is a member of the American Law Institute. Ms. Simmons is a past President of the Florida Chapter NBA, past President of the Port St. Lucie Bar Association, a former member of The Florida Bar Board of Governors, and the first female lawyer appointed to State of Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission. Ms. Simmons has been a speaker at The Florida Bar Elder Law Essentials Update and the National Business Institute (NBI) on probate topics. She is also a published author. Actively involved in the community, Ms. Simmons is a member of the Board of Trustees for Florida Southern College and chairs the Board's Diversity Task Force.

Ms. Simmons has been awarded honors by a variety of respected organizations, associations, and businesses. She was listed by Ebony magazine as one of the most influential African Americans in this country (2001). She was named a History Maker by Phi Mu Fraternity, Inc. (2019). She has been inducted into the National Bar Association Hall of Fame (2022). She is the recipient of the Gertrude E. Rush Award (2007) and the Sankofa Award (2013) by the NBA for her work in the community, the profession and with youth. Other honors include the "Alumna of the Year" Award, Mercer University School of Law (2001); "Outstanding Alumni Achievement" Citation, Florida Southern College (2001), Fernandina Beach High School Hall of Fame (2006), Key to the City of Fernandina Beach, Florida (2005); and a Proclamation from the City declaring August 11, 2000 Evett L. Simmons Day.



1994-1995

## LYNN D. SOLOMON

**LYNN D. SOLOMON** was born in Brunswick GA and received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Mercer University in Macon GA. She then moved to Gainesville, FL to pursue her doctorate in psychology at the University of Florida. After she received her Master of Arts degree in psychology from UF in 1982, she yearned for a career that would be more gratifying, so she switched gears and earned her juris doctor degree and a master's degree in business administration from UF in 1985. Solomon was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1986 and then relocated to Miami to practice law. Over the course of the next 17 years, she practiced in South Florida with concentration in commercial loan transactions, real estate transactions, corporate matters, civil and criminal litigation, personal injury, probate, wills, and family law.

Solomon played an integral active legal role in the affordable housing industry, representing nonprofits and serving on several boards of directors for various nonprofits and advisory groups. Solomon considers her role in advocating for home ownership, and her service as a poll watcher to be among her most important work. She credits such work as being on the same plane as representing nonprofits in public private partnerships. Solomon has served on the executive board of Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association, including as the president from 1994 to 1995. From 1995 to 1999, she served as Chair of the 19th Circuit Judicial Nominating Commission. In 2002, she started her own firm, Lynn Solomon, P.A., focusing on municipal law and public finance.

As a sole proprietor, Solomon served as a hearing officer and special magistrate for public agencies, including Broward County Florida. In May 2014, Solomon became an assistant city attorney for the City of Fort Lauderdale, where she continues to serve today. She primarily concentrates her practice in real estate development while rendering legal opinions on various municipal law matters. She advises young lawyers and law students to practice their craft with fidelity, and to develop an understanding and appreciation for the law and their roles as an advocate and advisor.



1995–1996

## MONIQUE M. EDWARDS

**MONIQUE MARIE EDWARDS** was appointed by Governor John Bel Edwards as the Commissioner of Conservation and was the first woman to hold the position until February of 2024. The Office of Conservation is located within the Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources (LDENR) and has the statutory authority to regulate all oil and gas activities in the state. The staff of over one-hundred-eighty-five (185) includes geologists, engineers, GIS, and attorneys. Under her leadership the office collected over \$1 million in penalties; the most the office had ever collected. Ms. Edwards previously served as a Visiting Professor at the Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she taught Louisiana Obligations, Common law contracts, State and Local Government, Professional Responsibility and Law Office Practice. Previously, she was appointed by Governor Bobby Jindal as the first African American secretary of the Louisiana State Mineral and Energy Board and Assistant Secretary for the Office of Mineral Resources also in LDNR. As Assistant Secretary Ms. Edwards managed a staff of seventy-two (72) employees consisting of auditors, geologists, accountants, engineers and GIS professionals. The Office of Mineral Resources has the statutory authority to lease, manage and audit oil and gas exploration and production activities on state owned lands and water bottoms.

A Louisiana native, Attorney Edwards has served as counsel to the Louisiana House of Representatives' Committee on Natural Resources and Environment. This committee has oversight over Louisiana Departments of Environmental Quality, Natural Resources and Wildlife & Fisheries. Prior to that, she was the managing member of Edwards, Valdez and Ellis, LLC of Orlando, Florida, in charge of the business law and governmental relations areas. She is a graduate of St. Mary's Dominican College formerly in New Orleans and received her Juris Doctor from the Southern University Law Center on May 10, 1986 in Baton Rouge. She continues to serve as the principal of The Edwards Law Group, LLC.

Her activities include being a member of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, Louisiana Advisory Committee, Junior League of Baton Rouge, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, the National Panhellenic Council of Greater Baton Rouge, Inc., the Catholic Charities for the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge Advisory Board and the Diocesan School Board for the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Ms. Edwards is a member of both the Louisiana State Bar Association and The Florida Bar. Her service to the LSBA includes past Chair of the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) Committee, a member of the Committee on the Profession and she serves as a mentor for new lawyers. Her professional affiliations include being a member of the Louisiana Mineral Law Institute Advisory Council, being the first African American woman to be a member; the National Bar Association where she was selected to serve on the Centennial Commission to commemorate the establishment of the organization in 1925; and the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society of Greater Baton Rouge. Previously, Ms. Edwards served as the Louisiana state representative to the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC). She was appointed by the Chair, Governor Mark Gordon of Wyoming to the Operational Finance Committee and serves as Vice Chair of the IOGCC Legal and Regulatory Affairs Standing Committee.



1996-1997

## V. LYNN WHITFIELD

**V. LYNN WHITFIELD** has been practicing law in the South Florida area for more than 40 years. A graduate of University of Miami School of Law, she started her legal career as an assistant state attorney. She relocated to Palm Beach County in 1985, and began working for the Public Defender for Palm Beach County.

She then served as an Assistant City Attorney for the City of West Palm Beach. After seven years, she opened her own practice specializing in criminal defense and municipal law.

She has been the City Attorney for both North Miami and Hallandale Beach. In addition, she has appeared as a legal commentator for Channel 25- WPBF, the ABC affiliate, in West Palm Beach. She has lectured to national, state and local organizations. She has been honored by numerous national, state and local organizations for community and professional services. She is a past president of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association, F. Malcolm Cunningham, Sr. Bar Association, Palm Beach County Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the Craig S. Barnard Inns of Court. She is a lifetime member of the National Bar Association and has been an active volunteer with Election Protection for many years. She was inducted in the National Bar Association Hall of Fame in 2023.

She is currently working as the Election Protection Fellow for the National Bar Association and Transformative Justice Coalition.



1997-1998

## ALLISON K. BETHEL

**PROFESSOR ALLISON K. BETHEL** joined UIC School of Law (fka The John Marshall Law School) in 2008 as a Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Fair Housing Legal Clinic. She is a Chicago native and received her undergraduate degree from Northwestern University where she was a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Black Folks Theater, and the Dean's List. She received her law degree from the University of Florida. While in law school, she received numerous awards for advocacy, including a Best Oralist Award, Best Brief Award, the UF Presidential Recognition Award and was inducted into the Order of Barristers.

Following law school, she worked in the private sector in Florida specializing in civil trial work. In 1996, she joined the Florida Attorney General's Office and was promoted to Director of Civil Rights for the Office in 2000. In that capacity, she supervised the development and litigation of civil rights cases, legislative initiatives, and training programs throughout the State of Florida. Since then, she has taught, lectured, and written nationally on fair housing.

Professor Bethel is AV rated, which is the highest rating a lawyer may receive by the Martindale-Hubbell rating system. She is currently Chair of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Section of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA). Her past affiliations include service as President of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter of the National Bar Association, Chair of the Legal Education and Competence Committee of the Illinois State Bar Association, Co-Chair of the Clinical Section of the American Association of Law Schools, and a Member of the Board of Governors of the Florida Bar. She also served on the Board of the local bar associations for lawyers of color in Palm Beach, Dade, and Broward counties. She is passionate about housing justice and preparing the next generation.



2002–2003

## AVA L. PARKER

**AVA L. PARKER** is the president of Palm Beach State College, Palm Beach County's largest higher education institution. She applies a strategic approach that emphasizes innovation, student success, and business and community collaboration. Parker is the first female president in the history of the institution, which opened in 1933 as Florida's first public community college. Under Parker's leadership, the college is taking proactive transformative measures to meet the evolving needs of the community. The college recently added two new bachelor's degree programs and established a cross-cultural equity institute with a vision to lead institutions worldwide in research, development, and implementation of culturally relevant practices to support successful outcomes for all students.

Not only is Parker a member of the governing board for the American Association of Community Colleges, but her leadership also extends beyond higher education. She serves on the board of directors of Orchid Island Capital as well as the Board of Professional Holding Corp. Additionally, she is a member of the Florida Council of 100, the Women's International Leadership Forum, and several other local organizations.

Before joining Palm Beach State, Parker was executive vice president and chief operating officer at Florida Polytechnic University and served for more than a decade on the Florida Board of Governors of the State University System, the University of Central Florida Board of Trustees and general counsel at Edward Waters College.

Most recently, Parker was recognized as one of Florida's most influential business leaders in Florida Trend's 2020 Florida 500 issue. Palm Beach Illustrated has named her a returning member of the Palm Beach Top 100—a list of influential community and business leaders in Palm Beach County. Parker is a native of Santa Rosa County in northwest Florida and earned her BA and JD degrees from the University of Florida.



2003–2004

## VERONICA VALDEZ

**VERONICA VALDEZ** is the Senior Vice President - Strategic Partnerships at Zoetic Global, a leading provider of global climate impact solutions. She previously served as the Vice President for Minority and Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Capital Programs at Enterprise Florida. She received her bachelor's degree in business administration and juris doctor from the University of Florida.



2005-2006

## BARBARA J. PITTMAN

**BARBARA J. PITTMAN** received her B.S. degree in Communications from The Florida State University in June 1977. She also graduated from The Florida State University College of Law in December 1985 and was admitted to practice law in May 1986. She was a prosecutor at the Hillsborough County State Attorney's Office in Tampa for approximately 3 years. Barbara next worked as a Senior Associate Attorney at the law firm of Williams & Associates in Tampa where she practiced all types of state and federal Criminal Defense and Family Law. In June 1995, Barbara founded the law firm of Law Offices of Barbara J. Pittman, P.A. in Tampa. Barbara's current practice areas are Family Law and Sports Law and she consults re Criminal Defense and Personal Injury matters. She is a former Contract Advisor (agent) with the National Football League and a current Athlete Agent registered with the State of Florida. Barbara is available as a consultant for matters involving amateur athletes located in Florida and represents athletes in Family Law matters throughout the State.

Barbara is admitted to practice in Florida, the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida and the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. She is a Past Secretary and President of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association; an Emeritus Member for the Florida Board of Bar Examiners and Chair and prior Chair and Vice Chair for the Thirteenth Circuit Judicial Nominating Commission. She is also a former member of the Florida Bar's 13-F Grievance Committee, Criminal Procedure Rules Committee and CLE Committee. Barbara is a member of several state and local voluntary Bar associations.



2007-2008

## KALINTHIA R. DILLARD

**KALINTHIA DILLARD, ESQ, CIG, CIGA, CIGI** serves as General Counsel and Deputy Inspector General for the Palm Beach County Office of Inspector General. After graduating from Clemson University and the Florida State University College of Law, she relocated to Palm Beach County to clerk at the 4th DCA. Thereafter, she practiced civil litigation at private law firms, and then worked as Senior Attorney for the School District of Palm Beach County, the 10th largest school district in the USA. She became the first female and first African-American General Counsel to the PBC OIG in 2015.

In July 2024, Ms. Dillard will become the first African-American female president of the Forum Club of the Palm Beaches, Florida's largest nonpartisan political and public affairs organization. Additionally, she is the co-chair of the Palm Beach County Bar Association's Bench-Bar Conference, which brings together judges and lawyers for a full day of training, networking, and dialogue regarding professionalism, ethics, technology, and recent developments in the practice of law. Ms. Dillard is a graduate of Leadership Palm Beach County c/o 2016 and Leadership Florida Cornerstone 39. She frequently instructs at the Association of Inspectors General Certification Conference.

Ms. Dillard is a past president of the F. Malcolm Cunningham, Sr. Bar Association; the West Palm Beach (FL) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated; the YWCA of Palm Beach County; and the Virgil Hawkins-Florida Chapter National Bar Association. Additionally, she is a past Chair of The Florida Bar's Law Related Education Committee, Education Law Committee, the Professional Ethics Committee, and the Grievance Committee for the 15th Judicial Circuit-Division A. She served three terms as co-chair of the Palm Beach County Bar Association's Professionalism Committee and has presented and written articles on professionalism, ethics, and diversity.

Ms. Dillard has been honored with the 2018 Attorney of the Year Award from the Law Related Education Association, the PBC Women's Chamber Giraffe Award, the PBC Chamber Athena Award, the Girl Scouts of SE Florida's Emerald Award, and as a 2023 ICABA World Woman of Impact. She was recognized by Florida Trend Magazine as a 2021 Legal Elite-Government.



2008-2009

## RACHELLE R. MUNSON

**RACHELLE R. MUNSON** is a Senior Assistant Attorney General in the Administrative Law Bureau of the Office of the Attorney General in Orlando, Florida. While with the Office of the Attorney General, Ms. Munson has served as legal counsel to various regulatory bodies in the Departments of Business and Professional Regulation, Health, Transportation, and Financial Services, and for a Direct Support Organization for the Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking. During her career in public service, Ms. Munson has enjoyed decades of experience primarily in the practice of administrative law, consisting of administrative hearings, rulemaking, board oversight, and as general counsel for a variety of collegial bodies.

She was formerly a Senior Attorney with the Department of Economic Opportunity/ Reemployment Assistance Appeals Commission, Program Administrator for the Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Administrative Hearing Officer with the formerly named Department of Labor and Employment Security. An advocate of various community outreach efforts, Ms. Munson has served in liaison and active capacities with the Florida Bar and various voluntary bar associations. Ms. Munson is a past president of the Paul C. Perkins Bar Association and of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association. Among her most cherished experiences, Ms. Munson heralds the work resulting in the publications of both volumes of Florida's First Black Lawyers.

Ms. Munson was appointed in 2018 by the Florida Supreme Court to a five-year term with the Florida Board of Bar Examiners (FBBE). She served as FBBE Chair from November 1, 2022, through October 31, 2023, where her responsibilities included administrative oversight for bar admissions for the State of Florida. She is a member of the Administrative Law and Government Lawyer sections of The Florida Bar. Ms. Munson, a mother of two and proud member of the Bahamian diaspora, is a graduate of the University of Florida College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and College of Law.



2010-2011

## DEANA H. INGRAHAM

**DEANA HOLIDAY INGRAHAM**, the 34th Mayor of East Point, Georgia, a champion public servant, is a wife, mother, and advocate who is dedicated personally and professionally to public service. East Point has been busy and as development interests increase, Mayor Holiday Ingraham is committed to being people-focused and clear about her desire to attract responsible developers who are interested in building community as well as building buildings and attract socially responsible enterprises that are interested in partnering to ensure economic mobility and opportunity. Mayor Holiday Ingraham is committed to collaboratively working with city leaders and national partners to advance equity and opportunity for all, ensure housing affordability and dismantle environmental injustice in East Point and pollution-burdened cities across the country.

Mayor Holiday Ingraham received a Bachelor of Science degree from Florida A&M University in Business Administration, Master of Science degree from Nova Southeastern University, and a Juris Doctor degree from Howard University School of Law. In 2018, 2019, and 2023 Mayor Holiday Ingraham was named as one of "Atlanta's Top 100 Black Women of Influence." She is a former Co-Chair of National League of Cities' (NLC) Youth Education and Families Council, former NLC Board of Director, past President of the Georgia Municipal Black Caucus and immediate past President of the South Fulton Municipal Association, who currently serves on the NLC Advisory Council and the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Board of Directors. Additionally, she is the founding Chair of GMA's Children and Youth Advisory Council and serves as immediate past Chair of the Environmental Justice Working Group for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Local Government Advisory Committee. She serves as a board member of the Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance, Clayton State University College of Arts and Sciences Advisory Board and is an esteemed member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. An advocate for children, Mayor Holiday Ingraham has held strategic leadership roles in Georgia's fourth largest school district and is currently an Associate Attorney at Washington Dreyer & Associates, LLC. She and her husband Willie Ingraham, Jr. are the proud parents of their daughter Nia.



**2011-2012**  
**SHA'RON JAMES**

**SHA'RON JAMES** is an Of Counsel Shareholder on the Government Affairs team at Gunster. Sha'Ron has over two decades of experience providing forward thinking, strategic advice to clients on a number of business and regulatory matters.

Prior to joining Gunster, Sha'Ron served as the Insurance Consumer Advocate for the state of Florida, where she represented insurance consumers and the public before state regulators and the courts. As a policyholder advocate, she championed key healthcare legislation that led to reforms in unfair consumer billing practices, intervened in triple digit long-term care insurance rate filings and in the proposed merger and acquisition of two of the largest health insurance carriers in the country.

Sha'Ron was appointed to this role by State Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater after her tenure as Division Director of the Florida Department of Financial Services' Division of Rehabilitation and Liquidation, where she directed the operation of over 48 highly complex receivership estates with entrusted assets totaling over \$1.4 billion dollars. Sha'Ron has extensive experience as a lobbyist and legislative advocate, having championed key legislation and public policy reforms that have been modeled in states around the country. As a result of her legislative advocacy, Sha'Ron has been cited in national publications such as the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Brookings Institution, and Consumers Union. She has also been invited to present to the National Governors' Association, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, and the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions.

Through her public service and civic engagement, Sha'Ron has earned an outstanding reputation in the community for her leadership and commitment to civic, charitable and professional organizations, garnering her the trust and respect of some of the state's most influential decision makers. A member of Leadership Florida Class 37, Sha'Ron served as the founding President of the National African American Insurance Association of Florida, past Chair of Leadership Tallahassee, and is the current Chair-Elect of the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce.

Sha'Ron received her Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from Florida A & M University, a Master of Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs at Syracuse University, a Juris Doctor from the University of Florida, and an Advanced Project Management certification from Stanford University.



**2012-2013**  
**HON. ARAMIS D. AYALA**

**THE HONORABLE ARAMIS AYALA** is an award-winning civil rights advocate, cancer survivor, and Professor who has dedicated her life to the pursuit of justice. As Florida's first Black State Attorney and a fierce opponent of the death penalty, she has made local and national headlines for her courage and proven leadership. In 2017 she received the NAACP Civil Rights Champion of Justice Award and was named "an agent of change" in a cover story for the American Bar Association Journal. Last year she was named the Champion of Justice by Harbor House of Central Florida for her work in the fight against domestic violence.

Aramis grew up in Saginaw, Michigan, received a Bachelor of Arts from The University of Michigan, a Juris Doctor from University of Detroit-Mercy School of Law, and a Master of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Florida. She has observed the far-reaching, multigenerational effects of systemic inequality and began her commitment to criminal justice reform early in life and took root when she relocated to Florida in 2001. This marked the beginning of her work with people left behind by the system. Having witnessed the consequences of structural inequality during more than a decade of public service, Aramis refuses to stay silent in the face of inhumanity, injustice, police misconduct, and systemic racism.

Following her 4-year term as State Attorney, Aramis joined the Legal Studies Department at the University of Central Florida as an Assistant Professor. Prior to running for office, she served as a homicide and major crimes Assistant State Attorney and as an Assistant Public Defender. She has also held positions as an adjunct professor of law at Florida A&M University School of Law, a legal analyst and as the chairperson of the Citizens Police Review Board for the City of Orlando. She is a Past President of several local and state bar associations and served as a Florida Bar Board of Governors Ex-Officio Member. On a national level, she was the Regional Director for the National Bar Association and was appointed to Chair the Pro Bono and Public Service Committee of the National Bar Association.

Aramis Ayala made history in 2016 and again August 23, 2022 when she defeated two Democratic opponents and became the first Black woman to receive the nomination for Attorney General for the state of Florida. Although unsuccessful in the General Election, Aramis continues to impact her community and this state as a proven leader. Aramis is happily married to David Ayala and they have two daughters, She enjoys reading, cooking, and traveling.



2014-2015

## **KAMILAH L. PERRY**

**KAMILAH PERRY** graduated with both her Juris Doctorate and MBA degrees from Stetson University and Stetson University College of Law, with honors, in 2002. She began her career as a business litigation associate with two top-rated Florida law firms, Carlton Fields, PA and Phelps Dunbar, LLP, in Tampa, Florida. Her legal experience includes labor and employment, insurance coverage, insurance defense, commercial litigation and business torts, products liability, white collar criminal defense and public utility matters. In June 2014, she joined Jaimon H. Perry as a partner of the Perry Law Group, LLC, representing employers and employees in commercial litigation and employment matters out of the firm's Tampa and Orlando offices. In January 2018, Kamillah assumed the role of Executive Director and General Counsel for the 9th Circuit under the Honorable Aramis D. Ayala, and in January 2021, continued the role under the Honorable State Attorney Monique H. Worrell. In her role, she serves as the office's legal counsel and head administrator of office operations, including fiscal management of the office's \$40 million budget, human resources, legal compliance, public records and information systems and administrative policy formulation. She is also a member of the faculty at Florida A&M College of Law as an adjunct professor, where she has taught classes in Law Office Management and Contract Drafting.

During her 18 years of law practice, Kamillah has become known for her proficiency in the area of employment law, and routinely provides complex legal training to employers in seminars, conferences and employment panel discussions. She has authored several nationally published articles, including the "Employment Law Manual Articles / Florida Requirements, XpertHR" in partnership with LexisNexis, among other academic writings. For nine consecutive years from 2013-2021, Kamillah has been named a "Super Lawyer" by Florida Super Lawyers Magazine for Employment and Labor Law, an honor given to no more than 5% of all attorneys in the State of Florida annually.

Throughout her career, Kamillah has also distinguished herself as a leader, including serving as past president of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter of the National Bar Association, past president of the George Edgecomb Bar Association, Chair of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee, Board Member of the Hillsborough Association for Women Lawyers, and past member of the Stetson University Lawyers Association Advisory Council. She served on the Florida Bar's Judicial Nominating Procedures Committee to assist with achieving diversity and inclusion on the bench. Kamillah has been listed as one of Florida's "Super Lawyers," the top 5% of practicing attorneys, for 7 consecutive years, has been named one of the "100 Most influential African-Americans in Tampa Bay," was as a finalist for the Tampa Bay Business Journal "2008 Business Woman of the Year Award," and a recipient of the Tampa Bay Business Journal's "Up & Comers" honor in 2012. In 2008, she received the "Volunteer Leadership of the Year Award" from the Tampa Bay Academy of Hope and the 2005 "President's Award" from the George Edgecomb Bar Association, in recognition of her outstanding community work and civic engagement. Passionate about community service and minority advancement, Kamillah says that one of her most rewarding experiences was being appointed by the Mayor to the Mayor's African-American Advisory Council, and serving as Community Development Chairperson for that Council in Tampa. She is also a founding member of the Tampa Bay Black MBA Association, and served on the Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections African-American Advisory Board, and a host of other civil and legal organizations dedicated to the improvement of conditions in the community.



2016-2017

## ANTONYA K. JOHNSON

**ANTONYA JOHNSON** has been an Assistant State Attorney for the 17th Judicial Circuit since 2006. She has litigated cases in the Sexual Battery/Child Abuse Unit, Traffic Homicide Unit, Career Criminal Unit and has been assigned to the Homicide Trial Unit since 2017. In the Homicide Trial Unit, she has had an active role in the investigation and filing of capital homicide cases including grand jury presentations. She has Death Penalty litigation experience to include both the guilt and penalty trial phases. Through the preparation of her capital cases, she has gained extensive experience in expert discovery and litigation in areas such as DNA, ballistics, mental health, and self-defense. Antonya is a past president of the TJ Reddick Bar Association and the Virgil Hawkins Chapter of the National Bar Association.

She is a class III fellow of the Florida Bar Leadership Academy, former member of the Florida Bar Grievance Committee, and currently serves as a member of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department's Citizen Review Board and executive council member of the Florida Bar Criminal Law Section. Antonya has been the recipient of the Broward County Bar Association's Young Lawyer's Paul May Professionalism Award and selected as one of Legacy Magazine's Most Influential Women in Business and Leadership.



2017-2018

## ASHLEE A. POUNCY

**ASHLEE A. POUNCY** is an Assistant County Attorney in the Public Health Trust practice group of the Miami-Dade County Attorney's Office. In this role, she provides legal guidance on general counsel-type matters in the healthcare arena, including board and committee involvement, commercial and contracting matters, and various medical staff issues. Previously, Ashlee practiced in the Zoning, Land Use & Environmental Section of the office, where she initiated civil enforcement actions and sought compliance with the County's environmental, fire, and building regulations.

Prior to returning to her hometown of Miami, Florida, Ashlee was a Staff Attorney for former Florida Supreme Court Justice Peggy A. Quince. She started her career in various roles in family law and administrative law in Tallahassee, Florida, and subsequently served as a litigation and appellate associate at a Miami law firm before she joined the County.

An active member in the legal community, Ashlee served as the 2017-2018 President of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter of the National Bar Association (VHFCNBA), and as Chair of The Florida Bar Law Related Education Committee (LREC). In both roles, she was an active contributor to VHFCNBA and the LREC publications. Since 2017, Ashlee has also served as a Florida Supreme Court appointee to the Southeast Division of the Mediator Qualifications and Discipline Review Board (MQDRB), and in 2024 was appointed to serve on the MQDRB's Qualifications Inquiry Committee (QIC).

Ashlee attributes a significant part of her continued success to her ongoing relationships with great mentors and believes in the impact of an active mentor. As a result, she volunteers her time mentoring various young lawyers, law students, and undergraduate pre-law students.



2018-2019

## LASHAWNDA K. JACKSON

**LASHAWNDA JACKSON** is a Partner with Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell, P.A. in Orlando. She practices in the areas of ride-share and app-based transportation, casualty and product liability litigation. She defends transportation network companies, trucking companies, delivery companies and other businesses against motor vehicle accidents liability, premises liability and product defect liability claims involving personal injury, wrongful death and property damage cases.

In 2020, LaShawnda became the first Black lawyer to serve as President of the Orange County Bar Association (OCBA). LaShawnda is also a Past President of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association, OCBA Young Lawyers Section, and the Paul C. Perkins Bar Association. She is also active with the National Bar Association and its Corporate Law Section.



2022-2023

## VALERIA I. OBI

**VALERIA OBI** currently serves as Labor & Employment Counsel for Coca-Cola Beverages Florida LLC where she handles all the company's employment-related matters. Additionally, she provides general legal support to the Human Resources team including reviewing and drafting various contracts; conducting investigations; reviewing and creating policies and manuals; developing and delivering training to employees and more. She also provides day-to-day commercial legal support to a few additional business teams within the company.

Outside of the office, Valeria is heavily involved in community activities. Valeria is the Immediate Past President of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association, the statewide bar association for Black attorneys in Florida. She also currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Hillsborough County Bar Association and is the Chair of the Florida Bar's Standing Committee on Diversity & Inclusion. Valeria also serves on the Florida Bar's Small Claims Rules Committee and serves on Florida State University's Black Alumni Board. She is also a member of the Tampa Bay Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel and is an active member of the St. Petersburg Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

Valeria is also a Past President of the George Edgecomb Bar Association. Previously, Valeria was also selected as a fellow for The Florida Bar's William Reece Smith, Jr. Leadership Academy, Class VI and graduated in 2019. She was also a former Board Member of Solita's House, a local nonprofit dedicated to assisting families with financial literacy.

Valeria has also received special recognition for her extensive bar service and community involvement including the George Edgecomb Bar Association's Outstanding Young Lawyer's Award in 2015 and their President's Award in 2017. She was also selected as a 2017 Young Alumni Award recipient from Florida State University. She received the Tampa Bay Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Award in 2017 as well as their Top Corporate Counsel Award in 2021. She was also named a Top 10 Under 40 by Tampa Magazines in 2021 and received the 2022 Florida Bar Young Lawyer's Division's Most Productive Young Lawyer's Award. Valeria received the National Bar Association's 40 Under 40- Nations Best Advocate Award in 2023 and most recently received the Florida Bar Young Lawyer's Division 36 under 36 award.



2023-2024

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ORLANDO, FL 32802

## VIRGIL HAWKINS FLORIDA CHAPTER NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1955 - "Moving Forward in Unity"

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2024

#### Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association Establishes Senator Arthenia L. Joyner Public Service Award

The Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association proudly announces the establishment of the Senator Arthenia L. Joyner Public Service Award, honoring the remarkable legacy and lifelong dedication to justice of State Senator Arthenia L. Joyner, the longest practicing Black woman lawyer in the history of Florida. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to public service, equality, and social justice, echoing Senator Joyner's tireless advocacy for civil rights and equal opportunities.

Born and raised in the era of segregation, Senator Joyner's remarkable journey from civil rights activism to groundbreaking legislative and political achievements serves as an inspiration to all who strive for equality and fairness. As the first woman to serve as a member and president of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association, Senator Joyner's enduring legacy continues to inspire generations of individuals dedicated to advancing the cause of justice.

The inaugural presentation of the Senator Arthenia L. Joyner Public Service Award will take place during the organization's "HERstory in the Law" - Women's History Month Celebration on March 27th at 5:30 p.m. The event will be broadcast live on Zoom, providing an opportunity for legal professionals and advocates across the nation to celebrate Senator Joyner's remarkable achievements and honor the recipient of this esteemed award.

President Roger L. Johnson of the Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association expressed his enthusiasm for the establishment of the award, stating:

*"As we commemorate the exceptional contributions of Senator Arthenia L. Joyner, we are proud to establish the Senator Arthenia L. Joyner Public Service Award. This award symbolizes our commitment to honoring Senator Joyner's unparalleled dedication to justice and her extraordinary legacy as a trailblazer in the legal profession. Through this award, we recognize and celebrate individuals who, like Senator Joyner, have demonstrated exceptional commitment to public service, equality, and social justice."*

For more information about the "HERstory in the Law" event, please visit: [virgilhawkinsnba.com/herstoryinthelaw](http://virgilhawkinsnba.com/herstoryinthelaw).

#### **About Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association:**

The Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association was founded in 1955 by a group of African-American lawyers who mercilessly fought against injustice in Florida. With a commitment to advancing justice and empowering communities, the organization provides resources, support, and networking opportunities to legal professionals across the state.

# INAUGURAL SENATOR ARTHENIA L. JOYNER PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT



## THE HONORABLE FENTRICE D. DRISKELL FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DISTRICT 67 HOUSE MINORITY LEADER

**HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER FENTRICE D. DRISKELL** was first elected to the Florida House in November 2018. Her approach of bringing common sense solutions to our state's most pressing challenges related to public education, the environment, affordable housing, social and racial justice, public safety, and economic opportunity for all allows her to bring accessible, passionate representation to District 67, which includes parts of Carrollwood, Lutz, Temple Terrace, the University of South Florida, and New Tampa.

In 2022, Leader Driskell's peers unanimously elected her as Leader Designate for the Florida House Democratic Caucus. She is the first Black woman to serve in that role. Leader Driskell serves as the Democratic Ranking Member on the Appropriations Committee. In 2023, EMILY's List named Leader Driskell its Gabrielle Giffords Rising Star. Prior recipients of this prestigious award include Hon. Stacey Abrams, Georgia State Representative Bee Nguyen, and Congresswoman Ayanna Presley.

Leader Driskell is an AV Preeminent-rated attorney who currently practices law with Carlton Fields in Tampa, Florida. Leader Driskell attended college at Harvard University, where she graduated in 2001 with an honors degree in Government and where she was the first African-American woman to be elected President of Harvard's student government. Leader Driskell's experience as Undergraduate Council President helped strengthen her belief in the importance of engaging women in leadership positions, and her studies in Government helped her better understand the importance of engaging diverse voices in the democratic process.

Leader Driskell also is a graduate of Georgetown law school, where she served as a student lawyer for indigent survivors of domestic violence and volunteered extensively with the Innocence Project. Following law school, Leader Driskell clerked for federal judge Anne C. Conway in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida. Since 2006, Leader Driskell has lived in Tampa where she has led or served on the boards of numerous organizations, including the George Edgecomb Bar Association, Athena Society, Tampa Crossroads, and the Hillsborough Education Foundation. Florida Super Lawyers magazine has recognized Leader Driskell as a "Rising Star" each year since 2011, and she was named part of Florida Trend's "Legal Elite" in 2019. She is also active in The Florida Bar and has helped lead committees there.



## PANEL DISCUSSION

“CELEBRATING THE IMPACT OF BLACK WOMEN LAWYERS”

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**THE HONORABLE NANCY G. ABUDU**  
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

**TIFFANI G. LEE**  
INCOMING DEPUTY MANAGING PARTNER  
HOLLAND & KNIGHT

**BURNADETTE NORRIS-WEEKS**  
PARTNER  
AUSTIN PAMIES NORRIS WEEKS POWELL, PLLC

**CHANEL T. ROWE**  
SENIOR COUNSEL  
JOHNSON & JOHNSON





**THE HONORABLE NANCY G. ABUDU**  
**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS**  
**FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT**

**NANCY G. ABUDU** was confirmed as a Circuit Judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit in May 2023. She is based in Atlanta, Georgia.

Prior to her appointment, Abudu was a lawyer with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) where she served as the organization's first-ever Deputy Legal Director for Voting Rights, and then SPLC's first Director of Strategic Litigation. Her responsibilities included overseeing all the organization's legal programmatic work which, in addition to voting rights, included immigrants' rights, criminal justice reform, children's rights, LGBTQ rights, and special litigation related to hate groups.

Abudu also spent almost 14 years with the American Civil Liberties Union, first as a voting rights attorney with the national office and then as the legal director for the Florida affiliate. Her experience also includes being an associate with Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP in the firm's New York office and working in the Eleventh Circuit's staff attorney office early on in her career.

Her civic activities have included serving on the Standing Committee on Election Law for the American Bar Association, the ABA's Taskforce on Building Public Trust in the American Justice System, and the Advisory Committee for the National Voting Rights Institute, as well as co-chairing the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys' political participation committee and serving on the board of the Georgia Citizen's Coalition on Hunger.



**TIFFANI G. LEE**  
**INCOMING DEPUTY MANAGING PARTNER**  
**HOLLAND & KNIGHT**

**TIFFANI G. LEE** is a partner in Holland & Knight's Miami office and a member of the firm's South Florida Litigation Group. She concentrates her practice in the area of complex commercial litigation, and she serves as the firmwide Diversity Partner.

*Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I).* Ms. Lee has been involved in the firm's diversity and inclusion initiatives throughout her career at the firm. Since 2008, she has served as the firmwide Diversity Partner. In that capacity, she leads the Diversity Council and serves on the firm's Practice & Operations Committee and Partner Compensation Committee. Ms. Lee leverages her DE&I leadership experience and subject matter knowledge to advise management and board members with regard to meeting evolving shareholder and stakeholder expectations for Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) compliance.

*Commercial Litigation.* In her 20-plus years of litigation experience, Ms. Lee has prosecuted and defended claims on behalf of business clients in a variety of industries. She has experience handling contract disputes, corporate dissolution actions, securities fraud actions, shareholder derivative actions and actions alleging various business torts.

In 2019, Ms. Lee served on the trial team that successfully pursued claims for breach of fiduciary duty, civil conspiracy, and aiding and abetting on behalf of the U.S. subsidiary of a global Spanish conglomerate. After a seven-day jury trial, the jury returned a verdict of full liability.

In 2018, Ms. Lee was appointed as a special master in Chinese drywall litigation pending in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida. As the court-appointed special master, she coordinated all aspects of the disclosures and discovery related to property damage calculations and made recommendations to the District Court on those matters.

*Community Service.* In the community, Ms. Lee is a member of the Orange Bowl Committee, Greater Miami Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, and the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Professionalism Panel. She is also a Big Sister with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Miami.

While in law school, Ms. Lee was president of the Honor Council, writing and research editor of the University of Miami Law Review, elected to the Order of the Coif and awarded membership in the Iron Arrow Honor Society, the highest honor attainable at the University of Miami.



## **BURNADETTE NORRIS-WEEKS**

**PARTNER**

**AUSTIN PAMIES NORRIS WEEKS POWELL, PLLC**

**BURNADETTE NORRIS-WEEKS** is a partner in the law firm Austin Pamies Norris Weeks Powell, PLLC. She serves as counsel to various governmental entities, including cities in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach and Polk counties. Additionally, her law firm handles serious personal injury, corporate and real property matters.

Burnadette is the Chair of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce. She serves on the Board of Directors for Habitat for Humanity of Broward and the Community Foundation of Broward. She is a graduate of Leadership Florida. She is also the founder of the Women of Color Empowerment Institute, Inc. (WOCEI), a membership organization with the mission to enhance and expand leadership opportunities by women of color. WOCEI spearheads a yearly conference that brings together hundreds of women in leadership from across the country. Burnadette is an appointed member of the Federal Judicial Nominating Conference for the Southern District of Florida.

Burnadette's extensive community and professional involvement has earned her the Above and Beyond Award from the American Bar Association's Section of Litigation; the Urban League's Margaret Roach Humanitarian Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the T.J. Reddick Bar Association. She is a past honoree of the National Trumpet Awards Foundation and was recognized by Legacy Magazine as one of South Florida's 25 Most Influential and Prominent Black Women in Business. Burnadette has received a "Leader of the Year" award from the Leadership Broward Foundation, among other impressive awards and recognitions for community involvement.

Burnadette is admitted to practice law before the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States District Courts for the Northern, Middle and Southern Districts of Florida. She is married to Aaron Weeks and lives in Fort Lauderdale.



## **CHANEL T. ROWE**

**SENIOR COUNSEL**

**JOHNSON & JOHNSON**

**CHANEL T. ROWE** is an accomplished lawyer, entrepreneur, community leader, and philanthropist. Currently, she serves as Senior Director and Senior Counsel at Johnson & Johnson, where she focuses on litigation policy and litigation risk mitigation.

Previously, Ms. Rowe has led legal departments as the Founder and Managing Partner of her own law firm and as General Counsel and Partner at a global FinTech company facilitating the sale of over \$1 Billion in securities. Prior to that, she served as Enforcement Counsel for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, and Judicial Law Clerk to a Senior Judge in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida. Ms. Rowe started her legal career as a Litigation Associate at two AmLaw 100 law firms. She graduated as the Valedictorian of her Florida International University (FIU) College of Law class, where she served as the Executive Business Editor of the FIU Law Review. She finished summa cum laude from Florida Atlantic University with a Bachelor of Business Administration where she tutored at-risk students in mathematics and economics courses.

Throughout her career, Ms. Rowe has demonstrated a commitment to education, leadership, and mentorship. She has held several leadership roles on the FIU Alumni Association Board of Directors, including Vice President. She has served on several Florida Bar committees and is a past chair of the Miami-Dade Chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers' Mentoring Committee.

In 2021, Ms. Rowe became the first Black woman appointed to the FIU Board of Trustees and the youngest trustee in the history of the State University System of Florida to be confirmed by the Florida Senate. As a Trustee, Ms. Rowe oversees the Audit and Compliance Committee. Ms. Rowe is also the newest member of the Board of Directors for the SEED School of Miami, a public college-prep boarding school for underserved students.

In 2024, Ms. Rowe established the Trustee Chanel T. Rowe Judicial Externship Scholarship and Book Award at the FIU College of Law for high-performing law students with a lower socioeconomic status from a single-parent home or a first-generation college graduate. The scholarship provides a stipend for students to intern with a federal or state court judge. The book award provides support for materials. Ms. Rowe believes a diverse judiciary is critical to the fair administration of justice in our courts and hopes the experiential learning provided by the scholarship will encourage recipients to consider a career as a judge or judicial law clerk.

Ms. Rowe has been recognized by various local and national organizations for her achievements including, the 2024 Donor Next Door Award, Florida Trend Magazine Rising Executives List, the 2023 National Bar Association Presidential Rising Star Award, Miami-Dade Bar Association Top 40 Under 40 Award, The American Lawyer 2021 Trailblazer Award, and has been listed as a Super Lawyers Rising Star in 2017 and 2023. Earlier this year, Ms. Rowe was admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, a distinction held by only 6% of lawyers.



