

Mission & Goals

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

The goals of the Women's Section are:

- ◆ To further the interests of women in the legal profession and the judiciary;
- ◆ To stimulate interest in and encourage discussions regarding legal and social issues of concern to women;
- ◆ To promote a spirit of mutual support, cooperation, and service, and to foster social contacts among the members of the Women's Section;
- ◆ To offer scholarships and support to deserving law students who have shown leadership potential, achieved academic success, and helped to advance women's issues;
- ◆ To promote diversity, equity, and inclusion; and
- ◆ To extend our network of contacts and support of women's interests through affiliation with California Women Lawyers.

The Women's Section offers frequent networking opportunities for its members, such as "Power Lunches" and happy hours, MCLE classes with notable and relevant speakers, and fundraising and community events, such as the Honorable Patricia Herron and Honorable Ellen James Scholarship



Women's Section

Contra Costa County Bar Association

2021 QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

*Welcome to the Women's Section
2021 Quarterly Newsletter!*

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

The Women's Section is proud to introduce our newest Board members, Elena Ramirez and Pamela Ross! Please join us in welcoming these impressive women.

Elena Ramirez

Deputy District Attorney, Solano
County District Attorney's Office



Elena Ramirez is a Deputy District Attorney at the Solano County District Attorney's Office. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from the University of California at Davis and her Juris Doctorate from Golden Gate University School of Law. Elena was raised and continues to reside in Richmond, CA. She enjoys hiking, traveling, and dancing. In addition to the Women's Section, Elena has been an active board member of East Bay La Raza Lawyers Association since 2017.

Pamela Ross

CEO / Managing Attorney, All for the
Family Legal Clinic, Inc.



Pamela Ross is the founder and Managing Attorney of All for the Family Legal Clinic, a sliding scale nonprofit serving low income and modest means families in the five main Bay Area counties. She focuses mostly in the areas of family law and restraining orders, although also practices in the areas of probate, estate planning, mediation, and landlord-tenant law. Pamela is the 2021 President-Elect of the Alameda County Bar Association (ACBA) and previously served as the Chair of the ACBA Family Law Executive Committee. She was honored by Assemblyman Bill Quirk as the District 20 Distinguished Woman of the Year in Law in 2014, amongst various other awards related to her contributions to the legal community.

and an annual Awards Dinner.

For membership information, please contact Jennifer Comages, CCCBA Membership Director, via email at jcomages@cccba.org.

2021 Board

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Solano County District Attorney's
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Pamela Ross
All for the Family Legal Clinic, Inc.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Introducing our *Member Spotlight* – **Sally Noma**!

1. For those of our members who haven't had a chance to meet you, tell us a little about yourself.	Hello! I'm Sally Noma. I am the founding attorney of Noma Law Firm APC. I first joined CCCBA when I was a shareholder with a firm based in Walnut Creek. I started my current firm two years ago and I live in the Rockridge neighborhood of Oakland. I especially appreciate CCCBA's focus on diversity efforts and was thrilled that my firm earned the Gold Diversity Award in 2020. My firm is sponsoring CCCBA diversity programming in 2021.
2. What are some of your favorite hobbies?	I love to read and through the end of March have read over 40 books this year. I always keep a mixture of all different types of books on my Kindle depending on my mood. I also love the outdoors so I try to get out every day for a walk or a hike. I recently took up golf and swimming.
3. Who or what inspires you? Do you have a mantra you live by?	My biggest values are to live with kindness and to live authentically. I remind myself often to not take things personally because very little negativity that comes my way is truly about me or my actions. One saying I like is: "Be kind, for everyone is fighting a great battle" and also "What other people think of me is none of my business". I am a huge fan of Oprah and Ru-Paul.
4. What type of law do you practice? Any specific areas or industries of expertise?	I am a plaintiff side civil litigation attorney. I specialize in large loss property subrogation. As you can imagine, it is a very niche practice. If you are not familiar with the concept of "subrogation" it means that once an insurance company pays your claim, they take on the rights of pursuit against any tortfeasor. A small portion of my practice is representing individuals and businesses in pursuing uninsured losses, but the vast majority of my clients are insurance companies. Most lawsuits I bring allege negligence, premises liability, products liability, inverse condemnation, and breach of contract.
5. What do you find most rewarding about practicing law?	I really love working with claims adjusters at insurance companies. Probably because I was a claim adjuster before I went to law school, so I understand the demands of that job. I love educating my clients about their options and about California law. I really enjoy product liability cases because I have a hand in getting dangerous products off the market. I am most proud of my years spent litigating against utilities in wildfire matters to encourage better practices and accountability.
6. As the founding attorney of your own law firm, what advice	Get a team in place and invest in your practice. It takes money and time to do things the right way but it will pay off. Initially, it was easy for me to invest in the

<i>would you give someone considering opening their own practice?</i>	nuts and bolts like software or furniture, but I had a harder time pulling the trigger on things like branding. I'm so glad I had my cheerleaders around me when I needed that extra bit of confidence. I also am a huge proponent of not doing any administrative work and hiring out every possible thing I can so that I am left with plenty of time to focus on what I need to.
7. Why did you join the Women's Section? Are you a member of any other CCCBA section or committee? Are you involved in any non-CCCBA organizations?	I am a member of a sub-committee of the CCCBA that is dedicated to disability rights and dismantling ableism in the practice of law. I am also a board member for California Women Lawyers and a weekly volunteer for Fresh Lifelines for Youth which teaches at-risk youth about the law and their rights. I joined the Women's Section to meet other women lawyers. There are not enough of us and I appreciate the support and camaraderie in the group.
8. What are some events you would like to see organized or hosted by the Women's Section?	<p>The reason I started my own firm is that I lost faith that any traditional firm would ever value my contributions as an excellent litigator and leader because of my gender and values. I also found traditional firm culture to be toxic to attorneys and staff.</p> <p>However, I know many women that instead of opting out and starting their own firms, have stayed within the existing structures to make change.</p> <p>There is an expression of "<i>Rock the boat, but not so hard that you fall out</i>". I would love to see a debate or discussion of when that makes sense versus getting in a different boat or jumping out of the boat altogether!</p>
9. The Women's Section is working to provide more programming relating to mindfulness, mental health, and well-being. What activity helps you relieve stress?	I feel the most stress when I wake up in the morning, so I started a daily journaling habit about two years ago that has been huge for me to just get out all those thoughts on paper for 15 minutes each morning. I also find that gratitude helps me reduce stress so I am on my second year of keeping a gratitude journal.
10. Last question: tell us something unique or quirky about yourself!	I have a great sense of humor and love to make people laugh so I am the first person to tell a self-deprecating story or share a funny anecdote. If I were to have a second career it would be as an actor or comedian.



More About Sally Noma:

Sally Noma is the founding attorney of Noma Law Firm APC specializing in large loss property subrogation throughout California. Prior to the PG&E bankruptcy of 2019, she led discovery for the Subrogation Plaintiffs in key aspects of the landmark 2017 North Bay Fires litigation, which totaled more than \$10 billion in insured losses. Since 2016, she

has been rated as AV Preeminent by Martindale-Hubbell, the highest rating for an attorney for both ethical standards and legal ability. Ms. Noma has been an insurance professional since before she was an attorney. She served as a Claims Adjuster, and then as an Education Consultant with Allstate Insurance Company, where she trained employees in Department of Insurance policies, procedures, and coverage provisions.

She is a member of Claims and Litigation Management Alliance serving on the Diversity and Inclusion and Subrogation Committees. She holds a board position with California Women Lawyers, which is dedicated to the advancement of women in the legal profession and society. In her spare time, Ms. Noma is an active volunteer with Fresh Lifelines for Youth, educating youth involved in the juvenile justice system and those at risk about the law and their rights.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to Women's Section Board member, **Marissa R. Boyd**, and long-time Women's Section member (and former President), **Audrey Gee**, who were recently featured in Law360! Marissa is an Associate Attorney at Brown, Gee & Wenger LLP, while Audrey is a founding Partner of the Firm. Please see article below.



Alsup Denies Class Cert. In Cable Installers' Wage Suit

By Melissa Angell

Law360 (March 4, 2021, 5:44 PM EST) -- U.S. District Judge William Alsup on Wednesday denied class certification to a group of cable installation company workers after arbitration agreements whittled the putative class from 238 members to 16, a size the judge said was too small to certify.

In a 13-page order, Judge Alsup said the proposed class could not be certified because 222 of the 238 putative class members agreed to arbitrate their claims. Under Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the judge said 16 putative members is too small to continue with a proposed class action.

"The proposed class fails for lack of numerosity," Alsup wrote. "The order compelling arbitration, as the law of the case, binds putative class and collective members alike."

Judge Alsup's decision not to certify is the latest development in the suit launched by Paul Monplaisir in March 2019.

The suit accused ITG, which installs cable and communication equipment across the country, of violating the federal Fair Labor Standards Act as well as a slew of California labor laws. Monplaisir alleged ITG failed to pay its workers minimum wage, did not compensate them for overtime, and shorted their wages over breaks and meal periods, according to court documents.

In a brief opposing Monplaisir's class certification bid, ITG said it paid its traveling techs California minimum wage in addition to overtime and production bonuses. The cable installation company also argued its policies provided 30-minute meal periods during the middle of the workday and 15-minute rest breaks for every four-hour period worked, according to court documents.

In August 2019, Judge Alsup certified a nationwide collective — which requires its potential members to opt in — under the FLSA, but earlier in March, an order sending the workers to arbitrate their claims reduced the collective from 380 potential members to 132 members.

Following the arbitration order, the proposed class moved to certify an opt-out class of California employees that required further discovery to determine applicable members, particularly how many putative members had been sent to arbitration. Before that could be determined, however, ITG and the workers reached a proposed deal.

But last November, Judge Alsup refused to approve the \$1.6 million deal between the cable installation company and its workers, finding that it "lined counsel's pockets" while the workers' compensation was inadequate.

Following the collapsed deal, the workers argued in January that the arbitration agreements are invalid because they appeared to be altered after they were originally signed. Of particular concern was the presence of blue-ink handwriting on the agreements, which "appeared to post-date the largely black-ink terms and signatures," according to the order.

Wednesday's order now means that the 16 remaining California employees who have not agreed to arbitration may continue in the lawsuit as individual plaintiffs if they wish to do so.

In terms of the blue-ink handwriting, the judge referenced the defendants' director of human resources, who previously said the department added blue or black ink to most of the arbitration agreements, to help alphabetize them.

"Our updated record demonstrates nothing untoward about the blue marks on class members' arbitration agreements," the order said.

Judge Alsup scheduled a jury trial to begin on Dec. 13, but acknowledged the pandemic could push the trial date back.

Audrey Gee, an attorney representing ITG, told Law360 on Thursday that Judge Alsup's decision enforced ITG's arbitration agreements.

"The court vindicated the strength of ITG's arbitration agreements and put to rest any questions on who was compelled to arbitration, enforcing the arbitration agreements against putative class members," Gee said. "In the end, the proposed class failed for lack of numerosity."

Representatives for the workers did not respond to Law360's request for comment on Thursday.

As of last November, the plaintiffs are represented by Sarah R. Schalman-Bergen of Berger Montague PC and Carolyn H. Cottrell of Schneider Wallace Cottrell Konecky LLP.

ITG is represented by Audrey Gee and David Marchiano of Brown Gee & Wenger LLP.

The case is Paul Monplaisir et al. v. Integrated Tech Group LLC and ITG Communications LLC, case number 3:19-cv-01484, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

(Link to article: https://www.law360.com/employment/articles/1361186/alsup-denies-class-cert-in-cable-installers-wage-suit?nl_pk=eca9f5ff-9c98-452e-b079-0ac7efb25703&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=employment)

Congratulations to Women's Section Board member, **Ritzi K. Lam**, who was recently promoted to Partner at Morrill Law! Please see press release below.

Morrill Law Announces New Partner

Apr 13, 2021



Morrill Law is pleased to announce that **Ritzi K. Lam** is now a partner of the firm.

Ritzi joined Morrill Law in September 2019. Throughout her tenure at the firm, she has proven her effectiveness as a highly skilled attorney and trusted advisor to her clients, stated Managing Partner Joe Morrill.

Ritzi practices in the areas of estate and trust administration and litigation, contested and uncontested probate and conservatorship matters. Her transactional practice includes drafting both routine and complex plans, and incorporates preparation of irrevocable trusts and utilizing closely-held family partnerships and corporations to help meet strategic goals associated with estate planning. With a LL.M in taxation law, Ritzi also advises clients on federal tax law and IRS regulation compliance issues regarding estate, gift, and income tax matters.

Ritzi's litigation practice includes representation of professional fiduciaries, trustees and other concerned parties in contested trust and estate matters.

(Link to press release: <https://morrill.law/morrill-law-announces-new-partner/>)

When Bias Is Exhibited by the Most Powerful Member of the Legal System, What Can You Do?

By: Beth W. Mora, Esq. of Mora Employment Law

- Judge who was drinking alcohol at a local bar event kisses a female attorney on her face several times while making sexually inappropriate comments;
- Judge commented while presiding over a domestic violence case in open court, *"On a lighter note, I can take judicial notice that women can drive you crazy."*, when approached by supervising judge thereafter, the two judges *"had a chuckle"* about it; and,
- Judge asks female counsel with a diverse last name where she is from, when counsel responds from a city in central California, the Judge asks if her family are farmers.

These examples are not from a fiction novel, they are real life, experienced by our friends and peers, arguably some of the less egregious examples taken from the few judicial discipline orders issued over the last several years.ⁱ As women attorneys, it can be an overwhelming dilemma when confronted with bias from the bench – from the most powerful member of the legal system, the symbol of impartiality, the very one who is entrusted by the public to administer justice. As daunting as this may seem, there are options.

Commission on Judicial Performance

Since its inception in 1960, the Commission on Judicial Performance (CJP) is the sole agency responsible for investigating complaints of judicial misconduct of state court judges. The CJP's mission is to protect the public, enforce rigorous standards of judicial conduct, and maintain public confidence in the integrity and independence of the judicial system.ⁱⁱ An attorney can make a complaint with the CJP. A detailed discussion of the CJP complaint procedure is located on their website.ⁱⁱⁱ

The standard of proof in commission proceedings is proof by clear and convincing evidence sufficient to sustain a charge to a reasonable certainty. *Geiler v. Commission on Judicial Qualifications* (1973) 10 Cal.3d 270, 275.^{iv} Should a judicial officer be subjected to disciplinary action – advisory letter, private or public admonishment, public censure, or removal from office/involuntary retirement – a judge may petition the Supreme Court to review the discipline taken, other than private admonishment. In contrast, there does not appear to be a process for the complaining party to appeal the closure of their complaint.

In 2020, the CJP had 1,868 judgeships within their jurisdiction, which includes 250 commissioners and referees.^v In 2020, the CJP considered 1,063 new complaints naming 1,320 judges, a total of 874 different judges. Of the 1,063 new complaints received in 2020, only 82 complaints received preliminary investigation. Ultimately, following investigation, the CJP closed 1,025 complaints in 2020 without any form of discipline as well as issued limited discipline. In 2020, the commission removed one judge (Judge John T. Laettner of Contra Costa County Superior Court^{vi}), publicly censured one judge

(Judge Matthew Gary of Sacramento County Superior Court^{vii}), and imposed four public admonishments.^{viii} The commission also issued nine private admonishments and nine advisory letters. Further, the CJP closed one matter without discipline after the judge resigned or retired with an investigation pending.

The 2020 CJP statistics show that bias or appearance of bias *not directed toward a particular class* (which includes embroilment, prejudgment, favoritism) was the leading type of conduct resulting in discipline in 2020; with 10 incidents of discipline. While in contrast, bias or appearance of bias *toward* a particular class was found in only two incidents of misconduct.^{ix}

The 2020 CJP statistics also show an alarming drop in Staff Inquiries (investigation of complaints), a factor which has fallen consistently since 2016, now at just 2% of complaints received.^x A 10-year summary of CJP complaint activity confirms a pattern where nearly all complaints made to the commission were closed prior to investigation with no finding of wrongdoing.

Moreover, the 2020 report speaks of a mentoring program; that in 2016, the commission instituted a program in Northern California for judges where an investigation had identified a problem with the judge's treatment of others appearing before the judge. In 2020, the mentors completed training for the Southern California mentor program, trained from curriculum designed by judges, ethicists, and a counselor. A judge's success (or lack thereof) in this program will be taken into consideration by the commission in determining appropriate disposition of an investigation. However, no further detail was provided by the commission as to this "mentor" program.^{xi}

The Auditor for the State of California engaged a report in April 2019 on the Commission on Judicial Performance entitled, "Weaknesses in Its Oversight Have Created Opportunities for Judicial Misconduct to Persist" which also examines elements noted in the 2020 Annual Report discussed here. Ultimately, the Auditor Report found that the CJP must address the following weaknesses: (1) It does not consistently take all reasonable steps when it investigates all alleged misconduct; (2) Its structure and disciplinary process do not align with best practices; and, (3) It has not worked sufficiently to increase its transparency and accessibility.^{xii} As a result, the Auditor Report found that the CJP intake and interview system could allow judicial misconduct to continue.

Based on the extremely limited scope in which CJP reviews complaints and even more limited action taken by the CJP, it is understandable as to why most attorneys (and the public) are reluctant to file a complaint in said setting. Even so, there ought to be additional options.

Local Bias Committee

In 1987, a Judicial Council Advisory Committee on Gender Bias in the Courts was appointed by former Chief Justice Rose Elisabeth Bird. As the first woman appointed as a justice of the California Supreme Court, the first woman to serve as Chief Justice of California, and first women Chair of the Judicial Council, it is not surprising that Chief Justice Rose Elisabeth Bird led this endeavor. The Advisory Committee was the first committee to focus on bias in the courts in California and is thought to be the first of its kind anywhere in the United States. The importance of Justice Bird's efforts on behalf of women to address bias in the courts cannot be understated, and is just one of the

many reasons attorneys across the state honor Justice Bird for her dedication to diversity.

In 1990, the Advisory Committee submitted a comprehensive report with 68 recommendations which were adopted, including the establishment of local court bias committees. As a result, the local bench/bar communities devoted time to creating bias committees. A Local Bias Committees workshop was held on October 2, 1992, which was a joint venture between the Judicial Council and the State Bar. Approximately 10 local bias committees existed at that time, one of which was founded in Contra Costa County.

On behalf of Contra Costa County Superior Court, Judge Barbara Zuniga attended the October 2, 1992 Local Bias Committee Workshop, entitled Judicial Counsel Advisory Committee to Implement the Gender Fairness Proposals. Judge Zuniga provided the then-current relevant procedures and discussed the Contra Costa County's Local Bias Committee's membership and structure, objectives, and how gender bias was defined at said time, as well as details concerning establishing and finalizing the complaint procedure. Accordingly, Contra Costa County and Judge Zuniga played a vital role in the foundations of local bias committees. I extend a thank you to Judge Zuniga and her efforts in our county and the state.

A formal report concerning local court bias committees was issued by the Judicial Council in 1996. The Standards of Judicial Administration were renumbered in California Rules of Court (CRC), Rule 10.20 -- Court's duty to prohibit bias.

CRC 10.20 states that each court "should" create a "local committee on bias", details that each court has a duty to ensure fairness in court proceedings, to refrain from engaging in bias, and to ensure unbiased decisions. CRC 10.20(a), (b)(1). The Rule identifies 12 specific processes for handling complaint procedures, within the required established local bias committee. CRC(c). Each local committee, and its purpose and "features of the informal complaint process should be memorialized in the local rules of court." CRC(d).

As of April 2020, within my role as co-chair of the CELA Committee on Elimination of Bias in the Judiciary, I independently conducted a review of the present local rules and the proposed rules effective July 1, 2020. Upon review, I confirmed there were only a small handful of the 58 Superior Courts in compliance with CRC 10.20. Further, 31 Superior Courts had no reference to bias in their local rules of court.

The Committee on Bias in the Judiciary for the California Employment Lawyers Association (CELA) actively engaged in public discussions over the last year to bring the dormant CRC 10.20 Rule to the forefront. We began to speak out about the existence of bias in the courts, including the broken complaint structure, as discussed in several articles.^{xiii} Public attention caused movement as several Superior Courts took steps to launch new committees and other counties made efforts to update their Local Rules. However, with progress comes growing pains. As these shockingly overdue local bias committees finally blossom in courts throughout the State, there still is no formal statewide transparency, no urgency to involve attorney voices, including from diverse persons or attorneys with experience in bias and investigations/training, and it is not entirely clear what role attorneys are even being permitted to engage in the formation of the CRC 10.20 committees.

Even though there is technically supposed to be another option for an attorney to make a complaint under CRC 10.20, even though there has technically been progress once the delinquent complaint structure was brought to light, an attorney still must ask what they can do when they face bias in the court.

Chief Justice's Work Group to Address Bias in Court Proceedings

On November 4, 2020, Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye announced a new work group to address bias in court proceedings, entitled Work Group to Enhance Administrative Standards Addressing Bias in Court Proceedings (Work Group). The Work Group is tasked with updating the protected classifications listed in CRC 10.20, considering the optimal role and composition of the local bias committees, and other changes to better assist courts in maintaining a courtroom environment free of bias and the appearance of bias.^{xiv}

The Work Group has been holding meetings since approximately December 2020, however they are not open to the public, nor does their appear to be minutes or agendas for said meetings. The Work Group does however provide open comment period, such as for a short window via email in January/February 2020, though it did so without a press release. Further, the Work Group held on May 4, 2020 a "view and listen only" meeting, which was also announced without a press release approximately a week prior. Said May 4th meeting did not provide a space for attorneys to speak, nor did it directly discuss CRC 10.20 in detail.

Before the Work Group makes their final recommendations, there should be a period for open comment. At this time, however, an estimated date for such meeting has not been announced. The Work Group anticipates they will make final recommendations to the Chief Justice and the Judicial Counsel in the fall of 2021.

What Can You Do?

1. Access the Work Group webpage, be informed, and stay informed on the status of the Work Group, and provide comments during public comment period(s).
2. Access the Contra Costa County Superior Court, Local Rules of Court for relevant information as to the Bias Committee.^{xv}
 - a. Statement of Elimination of Racism & Bias in the Contra Costa Superior Courthouses.^{xvi}

As attorneys and women, we are forced to be aware of the realities of bias in the courtroom. As advocates – for ourselves and for our clients – we demand a courtroom and proceeding free of bias, a fair procedure in which to present a complaint should bias occur, and a transparent evaluation of the complaint process.

We are seeking more than a seat at the table; we are seeking to help create the table where we sit. Join me, my friends, in demanding better for ourselves, for our sisters-in-the-law, for our future.

**Endnotes for this article can be found at the end of the newsletter.*

About the Author:



Beth W. Mora, Esq., Mora Employment Law, is a plaintiff employment attorney. Amongst her current volunteer activities, Beth serves on the CCCBA Pro Bono Committee, the California Women Lawyers Board of Governors as First Vice President, and as the co-chair of the Committee on Bias in the Judiciary for the California Employment Lawyers Association, where she recently was awarded the Strike Force One award for her work relating to bias in the judiciary and legislative matters.

Beth can be contacted with questions at bmora@moraclaw.com.

UPCOMING SECTION EVENTS

Women's Section May Book Club

Our next book club meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 20, 2021, from 1:30pm to 3:00pm**. We will be reading Educated by Tara Westover. Attendance is FREE and open to all members and non-members.

About the Book:

#1 NEW YORK TIMES, WALL STREET JOURNAL, AND BOSTON GLOBE BESTSELLER



One of the most acclaimed books of our time: an unforgettable memoir about a young woman who, kept out of school, leaves her survivalist family and goes on to earn a PhD from Cambridge University.

Zoom link to be provided upon sign up on www.cccba.org.

ApPEERing Productive – Organizing Edition A Collaborative Discussion focusing on Organization

This collaborative workshop will be led by Sarah Tetlow of Firm Focus, Legal Productivity Coaching and Consulting, on **Wednesday, May 26, 2021, from 1:00pm to 2:00pm**. It is FREE for all CCCBA members, and \$10 for non-members.

May's topic will be: **Organizing**. Organizing your business. Organizing your paper. Organizing your home. *Organizing your life*. Sarah will contribute strategic, practical, and applicable tips and techniques to improve productivity and support

healthier habits. What are you struggling with at work or at home that you'd like to crowdsource and get expert tips on? ***Submit your organizing questions to Sarah at: sarah@firm-focus.com.***

ApPEERing Productive is a unique workshop encouraging peer collaboration on challenges and successes that lawyers and busy professionals experience in their careers. Facilitated by Sarah Tetlow, including additional expert productivity tips, the bi-monthly conversations will dive deeper into various components of the busy professionals' life, including: sleep, work/life balance, email management, project management, self-care, family responsibilities, work challenges and successes, and personal and professional goals.

Zoom link to be provided upon sign up on www.cccbba.org.

About Sarah Tetlow, Founder of Firm Focus:



Sarah Tetlow is the founder and CEO of Firm Focus, which focuses on productivity consulting for attorneys and other legal professionals. She uses her past experiences, organizational and strategic thought process, education, and training to help law firms improve their bottom line and operate more efficiently. More importantly, attorneys see a reduction in stress and anxiety and an increase in focus and new business.

Sarah began her career in law in the early 2000s after graduating from UC Santa Barbara with a B.A. in Law & Society. Sarah has experienced first-hand the stresses that attorneys endure in trying to manage multiple projects. They also have the daily necessity to react to more pressing needs in a matter of minutes, causing frequent mind-shifting and multi-tasking. Sarah's mission, and the reason for starting Firm Focus, is the desire to see a change in the industry. To help attorneys and other legal professionals experience control over their day and mitigate the poor habits caused by the workload. Ultimately, through Firm Focus, Sarah wants to help attorneys boost productivity and reduce stress at work.



Women's Section Virtual Social Hour & Chocolate Tasting

Please join us for our Virtual Social Hour and Chocolate Tasting on **Tuesday, June 8, 2021, from 4:30pm to 6pm!**

The Social Hour will feature a 30-minute chocolate tasting with Lumineux Chocolate. The tasting costs \$35 per person and is open to members and non-members. The tasting kit includes enough chocolate for 1-3 participants. During the tasting, a facilitator from Lumineux will give a brief introduction to their chocolate production process and cocoa origins, then they will guide the participants through each of the chocolate varieties. As they go through each variety, they will discuss

tasting notes, allowing time for participants to discuss their thoughts on each variety of chocolate. This tasting is intended to be a fun, interactive experience for all!

REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS MAY 20, 2021 TO ALLOW TIME FOR SHIPPING.

Zoom link to be provided upon sign up on www.cccbba.org.

Questions about the event? **Please contact your host for the evening, Rachel Leonard, at: rleonard@tateandassociates-law.com.**

*** SAVE THE DATE ***

***Women's Section Annual Scholarship Fundraiser
&
Luncheon Program (Virtual)***

The Women's Section's Annual Scholarship Fundraiser & Luncheon Program will be held on **Thursday, June 24, 2021, from 12:00pm to 1:30pm.**

Our Luncheon speaker will be **Sejal Thakker**, Chief Civility Officer of TrainXtra, who will present on "*Best Practices to Mitigating Bias*". This presentation will assist attendees in understanding how unconscious bias can negatively influence their decision-making. Primary objective of the session is to raise consciousness about personal bias and how participants play a role in either perpetuating or dismantling their own biases. Learn how to avoid micro-aggressions and reduce levels of unconscious and implicit bias in decision-making and interactions.

About

***The Honorable Patricia Herron and the Honorable Ellen James
Scholarship:***

For over 20 years, the Women's Section has hosted this event, which provides ***The Honorable Patricia Herron and the Honorable Ellen James Scholarship*** to law students with demonstrated financial need, interest in women's issues, leadership promise, and a connection to Contra Costa County.

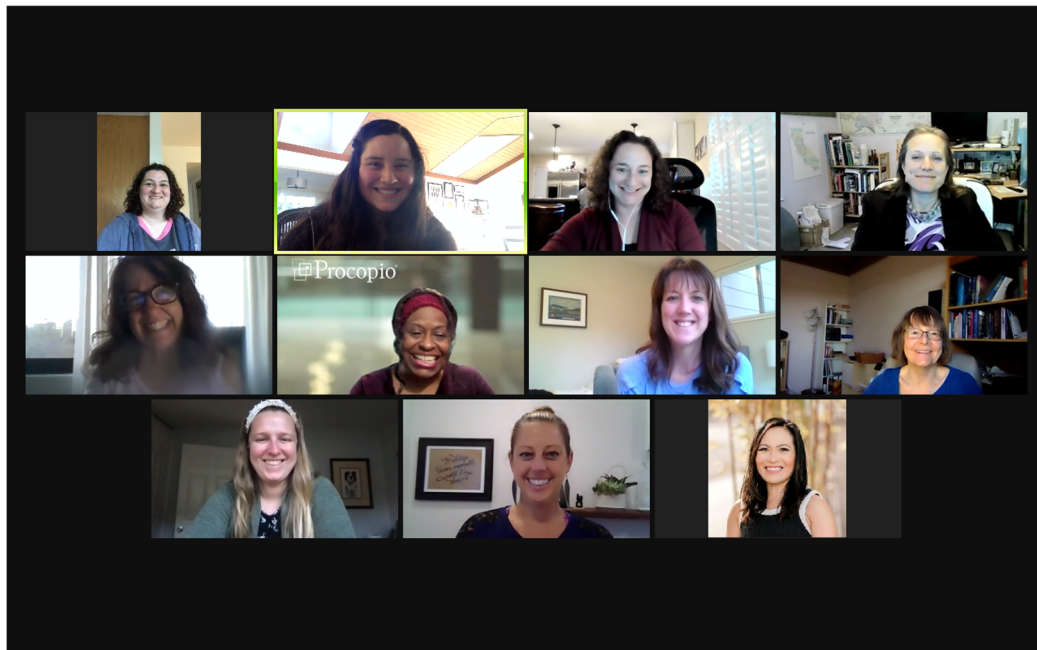
Without these scholarships, our recipients may not otherwise be able to pursue or continue with their higher education. Past recipients include law students who have worked with the Contra Costa District Attorney's office helping victims of violent crimes against women, developed after school programs for school-aged children, been active community board members in various organizations, and have worked nationally and internationally to promote healthcare and economic opportunities for the underprivileged – in large part while also attending law school. They deserve the recognition and support our scholarship provides and much more.

Your generosity in supporting this scholarship fund in the past has been over wine tasting and conversation. This year, we ask for your support directly.

The Pledge to Support/Sponsorship Form can be found at www.cccbba.org.

GIVING BACK

Thank you to the attendees of our March Women's Section Book Club!



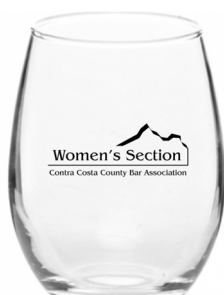
In honor of Cupcake Brown, author of [A Piece of Cake: A Memoir](#) and special guest at our March Book Club, the Women's Section has made a donation to **Alameda County Court Appointed Special Advocates (ACCASA)**.

More About ACCASA:

EVERY CHILD NEEDS A CHAMPION. Every child needs someone in their corner. For children and youth facing the complex foster care system, a trusted mentor can make all the difference in the world. Alameda County Court Appointed Special Advocates (ACCASA) recruits, trains, and supports dedicated volunteers to be the constant in a child's life — a person they can count on for compassion, guidance, advocacy, and information. The unique relationship expands the child's world through enriching experiences and forges bonds that often last into successful adulthood.

For more information on ACCASA, please visit: <https://casaofalamedacounty.org/>.

ODDS & ENDS



Wine glasses for sale!

The Women's Section is selling our signature stemless wine glasses for the low price of \$5 each. All proceeds go towards the Women's Section scholarship fund.

Contact us at cccbawomenssection@gmail.com to place your order today!

FEEDBACK

- Do you have event ideas you would like the Women's Section to host?
- Would you like to submit an article for publication or share a community service opportunity with your fellow members?
- Have any information and/or general feedback about the Women's Section you would like to share?

Please email us at cccbawomenssection@gmail.com.

We hope you have enjoyed the Women's Section 2021 Quarterly Newsletter!

Endnotes:

When Bias Is Exhibited by the Most Powerful Member of the Legal System, What Can You Do?

By: Beth W. Mora, Esq. of Mora Employment Law

ⁱ See Decision and Order Removing Justice Jeffrey W. Johnson from Office, June 2, 2020, California Supreme Court denied writ of review on February 2, 2021, a 111-page decision and order found that Justice Johnson repeatedly victimized women including a Justice, staff of the court and attorneys in the form of inappropriate sexual remarks and unwanted touches; See also Decision and Order Imposing Public Censure Pursuant to Stipulation re: Judge Jeffrey G. Bennet, March 25, 2020, on March 2, 2020 the CJP filed a Notice of Formal Proceedings against Judge Bennett, by March 18, 2020, a stipulation was approved by the Commission ending the proceedings, which confirmed 28 counts including bias based on conduct due to race towards a defendant and multiple sexualized comments to female attorneys. Finally, see as well Decision and Order Removing Judge John T. Laettner From Office, November 6, 2019, California Supreme Court denied writ of review on June 10, 2020, Commission determined Judge Laettner committed gender bias and inappropriate comments to and about women including a pattern of sexual harassment and sexual discrimination towards attorneys and females in court.

ⁱⁱ Commission on Judicial Performance, “*Weaknesses in Its Oversight Have Created Opportunities for Judicial Misconduct to Persist*”, Auditor of the State of California, April 2019, Report 2016-137.

ⁱⁱⁱ Filing a Complaint, http://cjp.ca.gov/file_a_complaint/

^{iv} 2020 Case Statistics, at page 10.

^v 2020 Case Statistics, at page 12.

^{vi} In November 2019, the commission issued an order of removal of Judge John T. Laettner of the Contra Costa County Superior Court. In February 2020, Judge Laettner filed a petition for review in the California Supreme Court, which was denied in June 2020. In November 2020, the judge submitted a petition for writ of certiorari in the United States Supreme Court. That petition was denied in December 2020. Because the matter was not concluded at the end of 2019, it was not included in the 2019 case disposition statistics. It is included in the 2020 statistics.

In June 2020, the commission issued an order of removal of Justice Jeffrey W. Johnson of the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division One. In August 2020, Justice Johnson filed a petition for review in the California Supreme Court. Because the matter was still pending at the end of 2020, it is not included in the 2020 statistics but is summarized in this section.

See 2020 Case Statistics, at pages 20-37.

^{vii} See 2020 Case Statistics, at pages 40-43.

^{viii} See 2020 Case Statistics, at pages 43-54.

^{ix} See 2020 Case Statistics, at page 19. Further, the Commission has issued a 25-point list of types of conduct for which a Judge may be disciplined for engaging in misconduct. This list includes several areas in which bias can be found, including for example: #4. Bias/Appearance of Bias Toward a Particular Class; #5. Bias/Appearance of Bias Not Directed Toward a Particular Class; #6. Comment on Pending Case; #8. Demeanor/Decorum; #15. Improper Political Activities; and #22. Sexual Harassment/Inappropriate Workplace Gender Comments. There does not appear to be a specific numerated misconduct for failure to report, failure to remedy or prevent.

^x See 2020 Case Statistics, at page 20.

^{xi} See 2020 Case Statistics, at page 8.

^{xii} Commission on Judicial Performance, “*Weaknesses in Its Oversight Have Created Opportunities for Judicial Misconduct to Persist*”, Auditor of the State of California, April 2019, Report 2016-137, at page 3.

^{xiii} See *22 Counties Not Complying With Bias Committee Recommendation*, Daily Journal, by Jessica Mach, July 6, 2020 – 22 Courts confirming they did not have bias committees and 30 Courts not responding to request for information; and, *Bias Committees Are Enigmas, Attorneys Say*, Daily Journal, by Jessica Mach, August 3, 2020.

^{xiv} Press Release, California Chief Justice Appoints New Work Group to Address Bias in Court Proceedings, November 4, 2020 at <https://newsroom.courts.ca.gov/news/california-chief-justice-appoints-new-work-group-address-bias-court-proceedings>

^{xv} Contra Costa County Superior Court, Local Rules of Court, Rule 2.150 Committee on Bias, at page 34.

^{xvi} Statement of Hon. Barry Baskin, Presiding Judge.