Additional biographical information of 2020 Brent honorees

Ruthe Catolico Ashley
Executive Director Emeritus; California LAW

Ruthe Catolico Ashley, Interim Executive Director of California LAW, is incorporating this new nonprofit as the foundational structure that will connect, collaborate, coordinate and communicate between the existing pipeline programs in California. California LAW will support the 14 existing high school law academies, 24 community colleges, six undergraduate institutions and six law schools that are partners in this project to diversify the legal profession in the state of California through the educational pipeline.

As former chair of the California Law Academy Support Council, she has dedicated the past decade to diversity in the legal profession. In 2010, under Ashley’s leadership, a collaborative effort of the State Bar of California and the California Department of Education created seven new high school law academies in California under the California Partnership Academy Model. These law academies were the first “boots on the ground” program focused on diversifying the legal profession starting in 10th grade. Ashley was responsible for overseeing the success of these law academies and continues to nurture and build new academies. Fourteen law academies are now in existence with four more in planning.

Ashley was elected to the American Bar Association’s Board of Governors in 2014 and is the first Filipina and second Asian Pacific American woman on the ABA’s board in its 138-year history. She is a former appointee to the Committee on Public Education, co-chaired the Women of Color committee for the Commission on Women in the Profession and served as chair of the Council on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Educational Pipeline. She served on the State Bar of California’s Board of Trustees from 2004-2007, chairing the Diversity Pipeline Task Force and leading the effort to form the Council on Access and Fairness, one of today’s leaders in legal diversity.

She is a past president of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, receiving its Trailblazer Award in 1998. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Special Diversity Award from the State Bar of California (2010) and the Francis Newell Carr Women Lawyers if Distinction Award from Women Lawyers of Sacramento (2011). She graduated from Pacific McGeorge School of Law in 1988 and practiced law for 15 years before returning to her alma mater as Assistant Dean of Career Services. Now retired, she devotes her time to diversity in the legal profession by building the educational pipeline into the law.

Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby
Chief Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals

The Hon. Anna Blackburne-Rigsby was appointed Chief Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals in March 2017. Blackburne-Rigsby chairs the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration in the District of Columbia, is a member of the Conference of Chief
Justices the Conference’s Board of Directors. Blackburne-Rigsby also chairs the Committee on Public Engagement, Trust, and Confidence of the Conference of Chief Justices.

Prior to being designated Chief Judge, Blackburne-Rigsby was nominated by President George W. Bush in August 2006 to serve as an Associate Judge of the D.C. Court of Appeals. Before that, she was nominated by President William Jefferson Clinton to serve as an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia from 2000-2006, and before that served as a Magistrate Judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia from 1995-2000.

Blackburne-Rigsby graduated from Duke University with a bachelor’s degree in political science and earned her law degree from Howard University School of Law, graduating in the top five percent of her class. After law school, she was an associate at Hogan Lovells US LLP (formerly Hogan and Hartson) in Washington, D.C., and later joined the District of Columbia Office of the Corporation Counsel (now District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General).

Blackburne-Rigsby has held offices in several judicial organizations, including the District of Columbia Courts’ Standing Committee on Fairness and Access, the District of Columbia’s Access to Justice Commission, the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts and is a former president of the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ). She is also a former chair of the Washington Bar Association’s Judicial Council and serves on the Board of Managerial Trustees for the International Association of Women Judges.

She has received numerous awards for her legal, judicial, and community service from groups such as the Women’s Bar Association of the District of Columbia, the National Bar Association, the Greater Washington Area Women Lawyers Division and the National Association of Women Judges.

**Deborah Epstein**  
**Law Professor and Director of the Georgetown University Law Center’s Domestic Violence Clinic**

Professor Deborah Epstein has been the director of the Georgetown University Law Center’s Domestic Violence Clinic for over 25 years. She has spent more than 30 years advocating for the rights of survivors of domestic violence and has represented hundreds of women in civil protection order cases.

She co-chaired the D.C. Superior Court’s effort to design and implement its Domestic Violence Unit, an effort to integrate civil and criminal cases involving intimate abuse. She was an early chair of the D.C. Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board and was a founding co-director of the court’s Domestic Violence Intake Center. She has been a
member of the D.C. Mayor’s Commission on Violence Against Women, the D.C.
Superior Court Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, the Board of Directors of the
D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and the Board of the House of Ruth.
Professor Epstein regularly provides training to judges, prosecutors, police officers,
attorneys and advocates.

Her scholarship focuses primarily on domestic violence law and policy, and she has
consulted nationally and internationally in these areas. Her most recent book in the field
is “Listening to Battered Women: A Survivor-centered Approach to Advocacy”; her most
recent article is “Discounting Women: Doubting Domestic Violence Survivors’ Credibility
and Dismissing Their Experiences,” 167 Univ. Penn. L.Rev. 399 (2019).

Professor Epstein graduated from New York University School of Law, clerked for
Judge Marvin Katz in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and was a fellow in the
Women’s Law & Public Policy Fellowship Program. She engaged in private practice,
first at Heller Ehrman, White & McAuliffe in Seattle and later at Bernabei & Katz, a small
civil rights firm in the District of Columbia.

Wendi Lazar
Partner at Outten & Golden LLP in New York

Wendi S. Lazar is a partner at Outten & Golden LLP in New York, where she co-heads
the firm’s Individual Practice and the Executives and Professionals Practice Group.
Lazar practices in many areas of employment law with a focus on executive
agreements, including retention, expatriate, non-competition, talent, severance, and
compensation arrangements. She also represents teams of executives, founders and
partners transitioning during a sale, merger and acquisitions and other corporate
transactions.

Lazar’s practice is international in scope, and she advises clients and attorneys in the
U.S. and abroad on employment, contract, and related immigration issues. She
represents individuals, partners and management teams at portfolio and public
companies, financial institutions and entertainment, advertising and media companies.
She also represents law partners and associates, accounting professionals, doctors and
medical practitioners in all transactional matters.

Lazar has built a reputation for representing senior women in employment negotiations,
partnership agreements, pay equity and discrimination issues. She served on the ABA
Commission on Women from 2015-2018, and she continues to work on the critical
issues she advocated when she chaired the Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based
Bullying Committee. She is currently the liaison for the ABA Labor & Employment
Section to the Commission.
Lazar is former diversity co-chair for the New York State Bar Association’s Labor & Employment Section and an active member of National Employment Lawyers Association, the ABA and other NYSBA committees. She is former employee co-chair of the ABA Labor and Employment Law Section’s International Labor and Employment Law Committee, where she is an active speaker.

Lazar was the founder of a quarterly column for the New York Law Journal and regularly lectures on employment issues to bar associations and industry groups. She is the editor in chief of “Zero Tolerance: Best Practices for Combating Sex-Based Harassment in the Legal Profession,” an ABA guide to combatting sexual harassment in the legal profession, published in 2018. She also co-authored “Restrictive Covenants and Trade Secrets in Employment Law: An International Survey,” published in 2010 by the BNA.

In 2014, Lazar was elected as a Fellow to the College of Labor & Employment Lawyers. She was named a New York Law Journal “Top Women in the Law 2016.” She also is a board member of Work Life Law, UC Hastings College of the Law. Lazar graduated magna cum laude from Hunter College and received her J.D. cum laude from Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, where she received a Ford Foundation Fellowship in International Law and was an Alexander Fellow, participating as a federal judicial law clerk.

Regina Montoya
CEO and chairperson of Regina T. Montoya, PLLC

Montoya is a Harvard-trained attorney who is CEO and chairperson of Regina T. Montoya, PLLC in Dallas, Texas, focusing on health law. Montoya is currently writing a book about the importance of incorporating Latinos into the economic, political and social fabric of America, and she is a frequent public speaker on a wide range of issues including health care, poverty, diversity and children.

Montoya ran for mayor of Dallas in 2019, the first Latina to run for this position. Prior to that, Montoya was the vice chair of the Board of Directors of the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and the chair of the Dallas Mayor’s Task Force on Poverty. Under her leadership, the task force identified key drivers of poverty and presented several recommendations to reduce poverty and close the opportunity gap. One of its greatest successes was creating a systemic and operationalized approach to reducing the child poverty rate from 38% to 31%, and it played a pivotal role in shining a light on the pervasive social and economic impacts of poverty on Dallas residents.

Montoya has received awards from the State Bar of Texas, the Hispanic National Bar Association, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, the Dallas Hispanic Bar Association and Los Angeles-based Mexican American Bar Foundation as well as the Harvard Alumni Association, the League of Women Voters of Dallas, the Wilkinson Center and the Girl
Scouts of Northeast Texas.

In 1993, Montoya served in the White House as an Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and was nominated by President William Jefferson Clinton to serve as a U.S. Representative to the 53rd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1998.

Previously, Montoya was Senior Vice President of External Relations and General Counsel at Children’s Medical Center of Dallas, the seventh-largest pediatric health care provider in the nation. She also was CEO of the New America Alliance, a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the economic advancement of the American Latino community.

Montoya has held leadership positions in the Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund, the Board of Directors of Girls Inc. (National Board), the Texas Book Festival, the Center for Public Policy Priorities, the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Society, Inc., Dallas Education Foundation, SMU Tate Lecture Series, and the Texas Lyceum Advisory Council. In addition, Montoya is a Hunt Institute Distinguished Fellow at Southern Methodist University.

Montoya earned her bachelor’s degree from Wellesley College and her J.D. from Harvard Law School.