

# Stronger Together

JUDICIAL DIVERSITY SUMMIT 2021

presented by

CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
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## Affinity Judicial Associations: What are they, and what are they doing to increase diversity on the bench?

Wednesday, August 18, 2021  
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

MCLE: none

JCE: none

Speakers:

Moderated by: Michael Rhoads, Attorney, Co-Chair, SacLegal

Hon. Linda Colfax, Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, LGBT Judicial Officers of California (LGBT JOC)

Hon. Elizabeth Macias, Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Orange, California Latino Judges Association (CLJA)

Hon. Mark McCannon, Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Alameda, California Association of Black Lawyers, Judicial Council (CABLJC)

Hon. Sonny Sandhu, Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Stanislaus, California Asian Pacific American Judges Association (CAPAJA)

Hon. Laura Walton, Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, Association of African American California Judicial Officers (AAAJCO)

### **Conference Reference Materials**

*Points of view or opinions expressed in these pages are those of the speaker(s) and/or author(s). They have not been adopted or endorsed by the California Lawyers Association, the California Judges Association, nor the Judicial Council of California and do not constitute the official position or policy of the California Lawyers Association, the California Judges Association, nor the Judicial Council of California. Nothing contained herein is intended to address any specific legal inquiry, nor is it a substitute for independent legal research to original sources or obtaining separate legal advice regarding specific legal situations.*

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## Program Materials

1. PowerPoint deck which includes information about CAJAC and contact information of various affinity judicial associations.
2. Speaker Biographies

# Affinity Judicial Associations: What are they, and what are they doing to increase diversity on the bench?

August 18, 2021



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# Speakers

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**Planning Committee Host:** Nicole Virga Bautista, Executive Director and CEO, California Judges Association.

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**Moderated by: Michael Rhoads**, Attorney, Co-Chair, SacLegal

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**Hon. Linda Colfax**, Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, LGBT Judicial Officers of California (LGBT JOC)

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**Hon. Laura Walton**, Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, Association of African American California Judicial Officers (AAAJCO)

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*Diversity is having a seat at  
the table.  
Inclusion is having a voice.  
Belonging is having that voice  
be heard.”*

*-Liz Fosslien and Mollie West Duffy*





# CAJAC

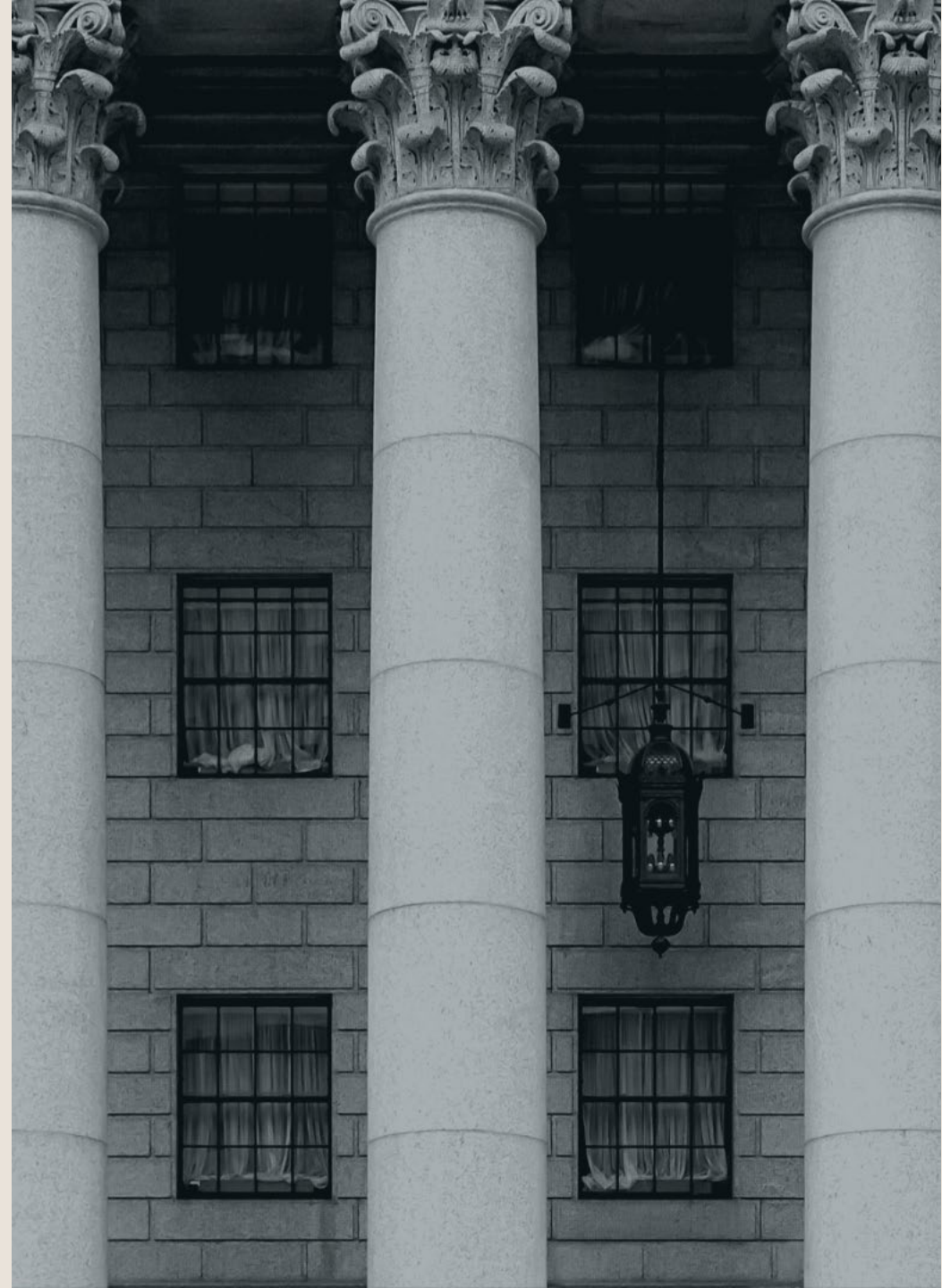
The mission of the California Affinity Judges Association Coalition (CAJAC) is to advance the goal of providing equal protection and access to justice for all in the California judicial system, through fostering mutual understanding and respect and by learning from and educating others about the histories and current realities of our communities.

The Coalition represents the great diversity of the State of California as members of the following organizations: African American Association of California Judicial Officers (AAACJO), California Association of Black Lawyers, Judicial Council (CABL, JC); California American Pacific Asian Judges Association (CAPAJA), California Latino Judges Association (CLJA); and LGBT Judicial officers of California (LGBT JOC).

Coalition members, comprised of committed leaders from each above organization, represent their associations' mission and objectives. Individually, and together, we represent the diversity that makes the Golden State strong.

# Contact Information

- Association of African American California Judicial Officers (AAAJCO): [AAACJO2017@gmail.com](mailto:AAACJO2017@gmail.com)
- California Association of Black Lawyers, Judicial Council (CABLJC): [mmccannon@alameda.courts.ca.gov](mailto:mmccannon@alameda.courts.ca.gov)
- California Latino Judges Association (CLJA):  
[CLJApresident@gmail.com](mailto:CLJApresident@gmail.com); <https://calatinojudges.org>
- California Affinity Judges Association Coalition (CAJAC):  
[CLJApresident@gmail.com](mailto:CLJApresident@gmail.com)
- California Asian Pacific American Judges Association (CAPAJA): [CAPAJA2020@gmail.com](mailto:CAPAJA2020@gmail.com); [www.CAPAJA.org](http://www.CAPAJA.org);  
[www.capaja-pac.org](http://www.capaja-pac.org)
- LGBT Judicial Officers of California (LGBT JOC):  
[LGBT@caljudges.org](mailto:LGBT@caljudges.org)



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## Speaker Biographies

### **Linda Colfax (she/her/hers)**

#### **Judge of the Superior Court of San Francisco**

Judge Linda H. Colfax, a San Francisco Superior Court Judge since 2011, currently sits in the criminal division of the court, supervises the preliminary hearing courts and presides over serious preliminary hearings. Judge Colfax has also served as a juvenile court judge and family court judge and has presided over both civil and criminal trials. Judge Colfax is a Vice President of the California Judges Association, a co-chair of the LGBT Judges of California, a co-chair of CJA's Task Force on the Elimination of Bias and Inequality, and an active board member of the International Association of LGBTQ Judges. Prior to her election to the bench, Judge Colfax worked as a San Francisco deputy public defender. Judge Colfax earned her A.B. from Harvard and her J.D. from the University of Michigan.



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**Elizabeth Macias (she/her/hers/  
Judge of the Superior Court of Orange County  
Judge Elizabeth G. Macias**

Judge Elizabeth G. Macias is the first in her family to graduate from college. She is a first generation Mexican-American. She was born to teenage parents who had an elementary school education and limited English speaking skills, but an extraordinary work ethic. Although her father is now retired, she proudly calls herself the daughter of a gardener because it demonstrates what is possible with hard work, support, and opportunities.

Immediately after graduating law school, Judge Macias was hired by the Federal Public Defender's Office for the Central District of California where she spent the next 14 years defending persons accused of some of the most serious federal crimes. She was appointed to the bench by Governor Brown in December 2012. In 2018, she was the first Latina appointed to serve on the Court's felony trial panel, where she continues to sit today.

In addition to her responsibilities as a trial judge, Judge Macias is the President of the California Latino Judges Association and past Vice President of the California Judges Association. She is also the chair of the California Judge's Association Diversity and Inclusivity Committee, the chair of the Advisory Board for Santa Ana High School's Legal Studies Academy, and founding chair of the Orange County Superior Court's Judicial Outreach Committee. Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye appointed Judge Macias to serve on the Judicial Council Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness, and Governor Newsom appointed her to the Judicial Selection Advisory Committee in Orange County.

In 2017, Judge Macias was named Latina Judge of the Year by the Hispanic National Bar Association and Judge of the Year by the Orange County Hispanic Bar Association. She also received the Be the Change Award from the Affinity Bar Associations. In June 2017, Santa Ana High School, her alma mater, named its Legal Studies Academy the Honorable Elizabeth G. Macias Legal Studies Academy. In 2019, she was recognized by California State University, Fullerton with the Vision and Visionaries Award, the highest honor given to alumni. That same year, she was named Judge of the Year by the Orange County Women Lawyers Association, she received the Ohtli (Camino) Award by the Mexican Government, in recognition of her work for the advancement of Mexican nationals in the United States.

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## **Mark McCannon**

### **Judge of the Superior Court of Alameda County**

Judge Mark Alan McCannon graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1992. He attended law school at the University of Pacific McGeorge School of Law. Judge McCannon started his legal career as a deputy district attorney with the Alameda County District Attorney's Office from 1997 until his appointment to the Alameda County Superior Court bench in 2013. He has served as supervising judge at the Wiley W. Manuel and Rene C. Davidson Courthouses in Alameda County. Judge McCannon was and remains actively involved in community organizations. Annually, he presents at the District Attorney Justice Academy-South County for students interested in legal careers. Judge McCannon also assists at East Bay Stand Down, which is a consortium of community organizations that host a four-day event every other year that brings together the nine-county homeless and at-risk military Veterans living in the Bay Area of California to connect them with services. Judge McCannon has served on the Board of Directors for the Judicial Council of California Association of Black Lawyers, the Charles Houston Bar Association and the Black Prosecutors' Association. He has also led numerous training presentations for government agencies, non-profits, and bar associations including the Alameda County Bar Association, Criminal Law Section. He has served as a panelist at several minority bar organization events, which were designed to encourage and increase minority lawyer judicial applications. Currently, Judge McCannon is the Chair Elect of the Judicial Council of California Association of Black Lawyers.

## **Sonny S. Sandhu**

### **Judge of the Stanislaus County Superior Court**

The Honorable Sonny S. Sandhu was appointed to a judgeship to the Stanislaus County Superior Court on October 11, 2018 by Governor Jerry Brown. Judge Sandhu is the first Asian-Pacific American judge appointed to the Stanislaus County Bench. During his tenure with the Stanislaus County Superior Court, Judge Sandhu has presided in the Criminal Arraignment court and is currently assigned to a Civil courtroom.

Prior to his appointment, Judge Sandhu served as the Public Defender of Stanislaus County. He served in several positions at the Stanislaus County Public Defender's Office from 2003 to 2017, including Chief Deputy Public Defender and Deputy Public Defender.

He earned a Juris Doctor degree from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. During his time there, Judge Sandhu was President of the Asian-Pacific American Law Students Association. He received his Bachelor of Arts degrees in Asian American Studies and Psychology from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Judge Sandhu currently serves on the executive board of the California Asian-Pacific American Judges Association as the 5<sup>th</sup> District Representative.

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## **Laura Walton**

### **Judge of the Los Angeles County Court**

Hon. Laura Walton is a judge on the Los Angeles Superior Court. She was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2010. She currently presides over a long cause complex felony criminal court in the South Central District. Hon. Walton is a founding member and President of the Association of African American California Judicial Officers, Inc. (AAACJO), which is a statewide organization of over 100 hundred judicial officers and co-chair of the Los Angeles Superior Court Judicial Mentor Program. She is a member of the California Judges Association (CJA) and is a member and was co-chair of the CJA Criminal Law and Procedure Committee (2018-2020). In 2020, Hon. Walton was appointed to the CJA Task Force on the Elimination of Bias and Injustice Committee. She is a member of the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ). Hon. Walton is a member of the California Association of Black Lawyers, Judicial Section (CABL JC). Also, Hon. Walton has served on the Los Angeles Superior Court (LASC) Access to Fairness Committee (2010-2019), the LASC Bar Panel Appointment Committee (2017-2019) and LASC Executive Committee (2018-2020). Hon. Walton is a seminar instructor for the Los Angeles Superior Court Judicial Education Seminars (JES) and California Judicial Education Research (CJER) (2016-current). Prior to her judicial appointment, Hon. Walton was a Los Angeles Deputy District Attorney (1995-2010). During her career as a deputy district attorney, Hon. Walton was selected for the VIP Unit that prosecutes domestic violence and sexual assault crimes and the Hardcore Gang Unit that prosecutes gang-related murders. She prosecuted over 100 cases including 30 murder trials. In 2008, she became a supervisor in the District Attorney's Office. As a deputy district attorney, Hon. Walton received numerous commendations from the Los Angeles Police Homicide Bureau, Sheriff's Homicide Bureau, Sheriff's VIP Bureau, and the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office for dedication, commitment, and outstanding trial work. Hon. Walton graduated from University of California, Berkeley in 1992, and from University of California, Berkeley Law in 1995.

## **Michael Rhoads, Esq.**

Michael (he/him) works for the California Supreme Court as a staff attorney for Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye and is the chair of the Court's Equity and Inclusion Committee. He is a co-chair of SacLegal (Sacramento's LGBTQ+ Bar Association), and was appointed to the State Bar's Council on Access and Fairness in 2020. He previously worked as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary for Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., as a Deputy Attorney General in the Criminal Division of the California Attorney General's Office, and as a Graduate Law Clerk for the San Diego County District Attorney's Office. He is a moot court coach at UC Hastings, and has been an adjunct professor at UC Hastings, the University of San Diego Law School, and McGeorge School of Law.