



FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION SOUTH FLORIDA CHAPTER

Remembering the Honorable Marcia G. Cooke

Senior U.S. District Court Judge for the Southern District of Florida

By Anshu Budhrani, Stephanie Casey, and Enjoliqué A. Lett

On January 27, 2023, the Honorable Marcia G. Cooke passed away, leaving a void on our federal bench, the South Florida legal community, and her greater Miami home. As a jurist, she had a strong sense of justice and always strived to be thoughtful and compassionate on the bench. But she was never boring: those who practiced before her will long remember her quick wit and humor. As a friend and mentor, she encouraged you – dreaming bigger than you would for yourself – but didn’t mince words concerning what it would require to achieve those dreams. She was kind and caring, but expected excellence from everyone around her. It made those of us privileged to call her a friend strive a little harder to meet her expectations – and we were better for it. Judge Cooke had a strong sense of community and brought people together. Her absence will be felt for years to come.



Although it seemed like it, Judge Cooke was not a native Miamian. She was born in Sumter, South Carolina on October 16, 1954 and raised in Detroit, Michigan. Judge Cooke was proud to be from Detroit (for most of her life she insisted on buying only American-made vehicles manufactured there). As she described Detroit in the 1950s and 60s:

Opportunities were plentiful. And I think for me, I had an opportunity to be raised in a safe, secure middle-class environment where I saw Black people and black success and excellence on a daily basis. And it wasn’t until I was older that I realized that some people didn’t grow up in that kind of community.

(Continued...)

In This Issue

Remembering the Hon. Marcia G. Cooke...1	Farewell from Our Past President.....11
Interview with Hon. Federico Moreno.....4	Awards and Installation Dinner.....12
Comments on the Bench and Bar.....8	Past and Upcoming Events.....12
President’s Message.....10	New and Noteworthy.....16

2024 OFFICERS

Stephanie Turk
President

J. Courtney Cunningham
President-Elect &
National Delegate

Tal Lifshitz
Immediate Past-President

John R. Byrne
Treasurer

Erica Zaron
Secretary

EXECUTIVE BOARD

- Yaniv Adar
- Brett A. Barfield
- Abigail Becker
- David Buckner
- Anshu Budhrani
- Stephanie Casey
- Alaina Fotiu-Wojtowicz
- Rachel Wagner Furst
- Meaghan Goldstein
- Laselve Harrison
- Celeste Higgins
- David Howard
- Vanessa Singh Johannes
- Martha Leibell
- Enjoliqué A. Lett
- Etan Mark
- Ana Maria Martinez
- Jessica Neer McDonald
- Margot Moss
- Bernardo Pastor
- Oliver A. Ruiz
- Jason Sternberg
- Naim Surgeon
- Michael Tarre
- John E. Thornton, Jr.
- Yisel Valdes
- Stephen Warren
- Hon. Robert T. Watson
- David S. Weinstein
- Christopher Yannuzzi

JUDICIAL MEMBERS

- Hon. Roy K. Altman
- Hon. Beth Bloom
- Hon. Melissa Damian
- Hon. Darrin P. Gayles
- Hon. Lauren F. Louis
- Hon. John J. O’Sullivan
- Hon. Lisette M. Reid
- Hon. Rodolfo A. Ruiz, II
- Hon. Eduardo I. Sanchez
- Hon. Kathleen M. Williams

As a young girl, Judge Cooke learned about Georgetown University while flipping through an encyclopedia at home. At the age of about 11, she made up her mind that she would go to school there. But the road to Georgetown was not devoid of moments of self-doubt. As she explained:

I held off sending [my application to Georgetown] because most of the people in my high school class were applying to Michigan or Michigan State, or maybe Notre Dame, which was a Catholic school. And I was like, am I prepared to leave Detroit and go all this distance away from home? I had always even eschewed my parents from even sending me to sleepaway camps. So why was I going to go this far to college?

Judge Cooke credits Sister Elizabeth Giradeau, her high school college counselor, with helping her overcome her fears:

I told my advisor, Sister Elizabeth Giradeau, who will always remain in my heart, for what she did next. I wouldn't send the application in, and I told her why – that I am sort of afraid of the rejection. She said, "But you've told me since you were in ninth grade that this is where you wanted to go to college." I said, "Yeah, but you know, sometimes we're often our own worst enemy." And I went to Georgetown with the Model United Nations project that Georgetown still sponsors. I believe that year our school was Swaziland. And she says, "Well, let's go visit the campus." I was with my other team members, and she sent them off somewhere. She said, "Marcia, I have something I want you to see." . . . And she escorted me into the dean's office and she had made an appointment with me with Dean [Peter] Krogh, (now Dean Emeritus), where I was interviewed, and he said, "I expect your application to be submitted as soon as you're back to Detroit." So how much more encouragement can you receive? Your high school counselor gets you an appointment with the dean of the school that you want to be admitted to, and the dean says, "I expect your application." So I was kind of pressured at that point to finish the application, and I was admitted it would have been the spring of 1971.

At Georgetown, Judge Cooke did not dream of being a lawyer; instead, she aspired to become a journalist:

I actually thought my future would have been a

lot different. I was always interested in politics and writing and international affairs, which is how I kind of got the Georgetown bug. And I always viewed myself as being a journalist writing about things at the U.N. or treaties and wars or anything like that. And my career turned very opposite, although I think the School of Foreign Service prepared me for the law. It's not what I planned when I went to the School of Foreign Service.



Ultimately, after obtaining her undergraduate degree from the Georgetown University Edmund G. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Judge Cooke chose to continue her studies at the Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, Michigan. She earned her Juris Doctor in 1977. Judge Cooke held a variety of coveted positions in the public and private sectors during her time in Michigan. She served as a staff attorney for Neighborhood Legal Services, a deputy public defender for Legal Aid and Defender Association, an Assistant United States Attorney in the Eastern District of Michigan, and in private practice with the law firm of Miro, Miro and Weiner. Judge Cooke first joined the federal judiciary in 1984, serving as a United States Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Judge Cooke's love affair with Miami began in 1992. Judge Cooke moved to Miami to serve as an Executive Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida. Within her first month here, Judge Cooke hunkered down for her first major storm—Hurricane Andrew. Never letting a

challenge get the best of her, Judge Cooke was steadfast and went on to serve as Executive Assistant United States Attorney for seven years.

In 1999, Governor Jeb Bush appointed her to serve as the Chief Inspector General for the State of Florida, responsible for promoting accountability, integrity, efficiency and ethical behavior in the agencies under the jurisdiction of the Executive Office of the Governor. From 2002 to 2004, Judge Cooke was an Assistant County Attorney in the Miami-Dade County Attorney's Office, before being nominated and confirmed to the Federal Bench.

President George W. Bush nominated Judge Cooke to the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida on November 25, 2003, to the seat vacated by the great jurist, Judge Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr. Judge Cooke was confirmed by the Senate on May 18, 2004, and received her commission the same day.

Judge Cooke was the first Black woman federal district court judge in Florida, and for the entire time she served on the federal bench, she was the only Black woman federal district court judge in the Southern District of Florida. Serving the legal

and greater communities of South Florida was Judge Cooke's passion. As a stalwart supporter of the next generation of attorneys and community leaders, Judge Cooke served as an adjunct professor at the University of Miami School of Law, St. Thomas University School of Law, and Wayne State University Law School. Judge Cooke was a long-time faculty member of the National Institute of Trial Advocacy (NITA), taught at various trial practice and litigation programs throughout the country, and lectured on issues related to trial practice and litigation. Judge Cooke also served as a General Council member for the Vice Provost's Council for Florida International University. As a proud Georgetown University alumnus, Judge Cooke served on the Georgetown University African American Advisory Board, was a member of the Board of Governors, and served as the national President of the Georgetown University Alumni Association. She was elected to the University's Board of Directors in 1998.

Judge Cooke took senior status on July 15, 2022. She passed away on January 27, 2023, surrounded by her family, in Detroit. We will miss her greatly.¹

¹ The excerpts in this article are derived from an interview with Judge Cooke, taken on June 22, 2021, for the We Are Georgetown: Celebrating Our Black History Oral History Project, sponsored by the Georgetown University African-American Advisory Board. The full interview is available at: <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1064772>. Punctuation in the excerpts has been cleaned up for clarity.

The Honorable Marcia G. Cooke Public Interest Scholarship

We are pleased to announce that our Board has voted to create a scholarship fund in honor and memory of our beloved Judge Cooke. The Honorable Marcia G. Cooke Public Interest Scholarship will be awarded to a local law student at the 2024 Awards and Installation Dinner. The Scholarship will include a \$5,000 award, funded by sponsorships and ticket sales from our 2023 Awards and Installation Dinner. We look forward to reviewing applications from promising law students who embody Judge Cooke's spirit of devotion to public service.

An Interview with the Honorable Federico Moreno

Senior U.S. District Court Judge for the Southern District of Florida

By Magistrate Judge Lauren Louis

Q. You were on the state bench for four years before becoming a federal judge. What was your decision-making process when you applied for the federal bench? What made you want to be a federal judge?

A. Want to be a federal judge? Well, every state judge wants to be a federal judge. There was an opening with a judicial nominating committee and I applied after Judge [Alcee] Hastings was removed. And I was lucky enough to come out and get nominated and get confirmed.



Q. What was memorable about your confirmation process?

A. You know, it was a different judicial nominating committee than today's committees. Back then, Senator [Bob] Graham and Senator [Connie] Mack worked together. Senator Graham had appointed me to the county court bench in 1986, and he was kind enough to swear me in for county court, which is unheard of. He was also running for the Senate. The only thing is he said, "My schedule's very busy, so it's gotta be done at 8:30." So a lot of my family and my wife's family were late and everything, but

he was super nice at doing that. So we became close friends and the Senate was a Democratic Senate then. The President was George H.W. Bush, Bush 41. But they worked together, Connie Mack and Bob Graham. But what they did is they had a judicial nominating committee. I think they started that. Very few states have that, but they did. It was a statewide committee.

I don't remember the exact number, but it was like a jury, so it was twelve to fifteen people from the whole state. So people did apply, and I don't think they sent out like three names to the White House, from what I remember. Just after that, I got nominated.

I remember the main question I was asked: "Don't you think you're too young to be a federal judge?" It wasn't as common, because when I got appointed, I was the youngest federal judge in the United States at the time. Not ever, but at the time. That of course, that record, was broken after me by Judge Adalberto Jordan by a little bit, and by Judge Roy Altman by a couple years. It was an intense process; it was tough because you had tough questions, but it was easy in the sense that it wasn't as formal as it is today. People got along. And then, I got it.

The process was fairly fast because I still remember, before you get nominated of course, they would do all the background – the FBI check. And once they selected you, the President would still not nominate you, but it would leak out. So, it leaked out. There were a couple other judges who were thought of, but they didn't come out. There were three names that were out there. I don't think they were necessarily sent up to the White House, but the press said those are the top candidates. *(Continued...)*

They tell you before that the President's going to call you with the nomination. President Bush Sr. called every nominee. I don't think any other President has done it, not even his son, that I know of. But it was very nice. So, it wasn't anything special for me in that sense, but it was very special for me and my family in another sense. They tell you ahead of time, so I told my wife. It was May 27th, while I was vacationing in Greece. We didn't have cell phones in those days. So, one of my friends, my brother-in-law, Manny Morales, a great trial lawyer and now mediator, was with us and some other friends. And they said, "the President is going to call you." So, we waited the beginning of the night—everybody in my hotel room in Athens. The President didn't call. The rest of my group said, "We're outta here. We're on vacation. We're going to dinner." I said, "I can't; I have to stay by the phone!" He didn't call.

We went on a cruise for a week. When I came back on Sunday, my wife wakes me up. I guess Bush called on Sundays. Then she said, "Fred, it's your phone call!" And I pick up the phone; I'm kinda half asleep. And my brother-in-law is always a jokester. He had that New England twang and he goes, "Federico, it's George." I saw the long distance number. And I thought, god he's good but I wanted to say, "Manny, hang up. Don't joke about this. You're monopolizing my phone." And, I was ready to hang up, but I didn't say anything until the person said, "George Bush." And I said, oh, this sounds just like him. And we had a long conversation. Ten or fifteen minutes, what seemed like a lifetime. We talked about people we know, including his son of course, who was in Miami. I think, when I was a state judge, he [Jeb Bush] was the head of the Republican Party. When I ran for my position in state court, I had an opponent for a little bit, so we had to know the whole county. So, I got to know him, and a lot of other people, when I was running for state court. So that was actually a good experience for me.

By June—I think at the end of June—I had the confirmation hearing. The chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee is still very famous: then Senator Joseph Biden. The Democrats were in control, Strom Thurmond was the lead Republican.

Both Senator Graham and Senator Mack testified. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, my Congressional representative was there. The reason I remember that very well in addition is because one of the questions Senator Thurmond asked her was, "Well, we need to get your husband confirmed too." Dexter Lehtinen was up to be United States Attorney. And the confirmation hearing included another district court judge, a court of appeals judge, there were two or three of us all individually. So, it was very nice. And then by the Fourth of July recess, right before or right after, the whole Senate votes. And by July 16th (so May 27th-July 16th), the President signed the appointment.

It was so fast that, I was still a state circuit court judge. You know the press, there was a big headline when the President called me. I remember being in the basement of the Justice building, now the Gerstein building, and seeing other judges and some of the lead prosecutors, like Janet Reno, who said "Hey, Judge, you got a call in Greece! That's very nice!" And she was always pretty nice. And I said, "Yeah, we'll see what happens." But, it was really fast. So fast that all of a sudden, I guess I got to start in federal court. But then Chief Judge King said, "You gotta wait until your investiture. We don't do 'shacking up' in federal court. The appointment is done, but you have to be sworn in."

And then at the end of July, we always vacation in Siesta Key. So after, I said, "I guess I'll go to state court, and finish up work." When I went back to state court, my chambers and courtroom were taken over by another state judge. So, I couldn't work in federal court; they didn't want me in state court. I assume I got paid as a state court judge; I don't even remember. When you're young, you don't think too much about insurance and things like that. So we had to have an investiture right away. And August 15, 1990 was my investiture.

Q. What do you remember about your investiture?

A. It was the first video tape investiture. Judge King said, "We'll let cameras in." You gotta remember, it's 1990, so—I mean, we still have issues with cameras in the courtroom. I still have it on VHS.

Q. Your nomination was historic for something else. You were the first Latin-born federal judge. Isn't that right?

A. Well, I guess Latin-born, yes. But, you remember Jose Alejandro Gonzalez had been a federal judge, a great judge. He's retired now, but he was born in Tampa. His mother and father were from Spain, from Asturias. So, I mean, he was Hispanic, but he grew up in Tampa and in Broward County, he used to be the state chief judge. He was a great judge. So, you know, it was true. I was considered Hispanic. I'm not Cuban, but half of the people think I am. My wife says that her family that was very prominent in Cuba said I would naturalize to be Cuban.

Q. What about naturalizations? Some judges say that they're the best part of the job. Do you love those ceremonies?

A. I love it. I'm not lengthy with it, because I remember you wait a long time with paperwork and the immigration. I do tell them about my story: I got sworn in in the Northern District of Indiana after I graduated from college. I was going to go back to Venezuela and work in the oil industry and become a rich Venezuelan after I graduated from Notre Dame. But then I changed my mind. I took a year off, stayed at Notre Dame teaching and going to MBA school. I didn't really like it that much back then, but it was good because it was football season in the fall. And I said, "you know what, I'm gonna go to law school, but let me go close to Venezuela." And that's why I came to Miami. And there I met my wife, who was the best student in the class and I said, "I'm gonna marry her." Even before we went out. Her Cuban family welcomed me, and I had to sign an affidavit that said, "I will never leave Dade county." And it worked out pretty well for me.

Q. I never knew that story before.

A. Never leave Miami-Dade County. It was just Dade County then. And it worked out fine. I was a lawyer and then became a judge. I was always supported by the Cuban-American Bar. And there weren't many back then in state court. Gisela Cardonne was appointed around my time, too, by Governor Graham. But before that, it was only Judge

Goderich, Judge Corvic, and Judge Esquiroz who were on the state bench. In fact, I remember at my county court investiture, Governor Graham saying, "Oh, you know, you all think I appointed him because he is Cuban." And he says, "No, I've always known he was Venezuelan. I did it to get all the Venezuelan votes." Now this is in 1986 when he's running for Senate. There weren't any Venezuelan votes in Florida back then. So he even joked about that.



Q. It is obvious you love this job.

A. I do. You know, three years ago, I took senior status and it took me three years to decide to take senior status. So, I could've left six years ago. And you know, as you all know, federal judges take their salary no matter what. Some work for law firms, some just enjoy life, others continue to do a little bit. I do like all sorts of cases, and I find it also depends on who the lawyers are, that's what I say. So, I remained as a senior judge. Sometimes taking a full caseload, sometimes just turning it off.

Q. Is there anything you miss about being fully active?

A. You know, I struggled for three years on the decision. People say, "Why do judges stay on active?" We have some great judges on our Court who continue to work to help the court out because they do take, they have to take 100% if you're an active judge, no matter how old you are. We have some great judges. So, we should be very thankful. Judge Lawrence King, who loves this court, who's been the oldest serving district judge in the nation. By now, he's 95. He took senior status soon after I came on board. And he said, "You know, I do that

for the court so that another judge can come on.” And I know Judge Donald Graham also believed in that.

So, eventually, I was convinced. Everybody’s different about that. But I didn’t have any problems. I think you think about it before you make the decision, and it all depends on the family circumstances. The great advantage is you can pick and choose what kinds of cases you want, and when you want them. When I choose, the only thing I exclude myself from are pro se cases. Those I think are the toughest cases, because you gotta do something for the pro se individual, and you feel unfair to the lawyer. And sometimes they don’t understand, and you get sued by them. I have.

Also recently, I tried my last patent case, which was very exciting and good, but I said, you know... Those are the only two cases—pro se and patent.

Q. Surely you have seen some exceptional lawyers in those trials. Are there any closing arguments that stand out as exceptional to you?

A. Albert Krieger gave a great closing argument, but there’s so many. You know, if you have seven hundred and seventy-some cases, it’s hard to remember which ones. But the best ones are the ones that have the language for the jurors to understand. He was a great lawyer. But I don’t even want to get into that, who was and who was not, because there’s so many. We are so lucky. Just like lawyers say, “Who’s your judge?”, guess what we say, “Who’s the lawyer?” Sometimes we say, “Oh, great!”; sometimes we say, “Oh my goodness. Refer it to the magistrate judge. Let them deal with him first.”

Note from the Editors: Stay tuned for our next edition for the conclusion of Magistrate Judge Louis’s interview of Judge Moreno, including Judge Moreno’s best advice for young judges and young lawyers.

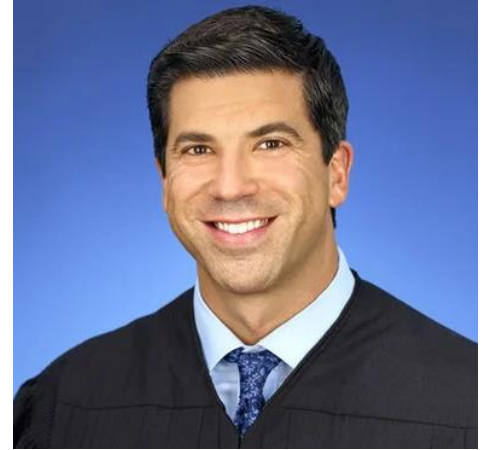
*Please visit our Chapter’s website for links to past and future events and information about our ongoing initiatives.
Check it out at: <https://www.fba-sdfla.org/>.*

Remarks on the Bench and Bar Conference

From Judge Roy K. Altman

On September 8, 2023—for the first time in six years—South Florida’s federal judges and lawyers came together at the Miami Beach Convention Center for what turned out to be a thrilling and inspiring Bench and Bar Conference.

It was the biggest and most successful conference we’ve ever held—all told, 1,100 people registered—and I think I know why (in four parts). *First*, it’s still important for lawyers and judges to get together. As our Chief Judge recognized, however much it’s important to have some separation between bench and bar, each has a lot to learn from the other—and that’s the guiding principle of our conference. *Second*, our District—spanning over 300 miles, home to millions of people—has changed a lot since 2017. For reasons of tax policy, COVID, and Lionel Messi, our District has exploded in population these last few years. There are now hundreds (perhaps thousands) of new South Florida lawyers who’ve never had the chance to attend a Bench and Bar conference or to meet (and get to know) our judges. *Third*, about twenty percent of our registrants were young lawyers who’ve been out of law school for less than six years and who (by definition) have *never* had the chance to attend one of these conferences. *Fourth*, since 2017, we’ve seen *five* new federal district judges—and *seven* new federal magistrate judges—join our ranks. So, the complexion of our Bench is different; the makeup of our Bar is different; and the look and feel of our legal community is very different than it was in 2017.



As far as the conference itself, our registrants were thoroughly entertained. Two former solicitors general of the United States—Miguel Estrada and Neal Katyal—kicked us off with a thought-provoking (and hilarious) back-and-forth on the recent Supreme Court term, which included (among other things) a recap of *Moore v. Harper* (the independent-state-legislature case), which Mr. Katyal had argued and won before the Supreme Court. We then broke out into three sessions: one on the future of civil jury trials, a second on criminal sentencing, and a third for our youngest lawyers—all led by our federal judges. For lunch, we came back to the



main ballroom for the keynote panel on the many ways in which lawyers can, for just five or six hours a month, help the most vulnerable people in our community: the victims of human trafficking, child exploitation, and domestic abuse. The afternoon saw three more judge-led panels: one on criminal jury trials, one on MDLs and class actions, and a third on magistrate-court practices. We finished up with a fascinating celebration of the 60th anniversary of *Gideon v. Wainwright*, which (of course) was an important decision for indigent defendants in America—but which was also so much more than that: It was the culmination (Professor Akhil Amar of Yale Law School told us) of a debate that had been raging for decades between Justices Black and Frankfurter about the extent to which the Bill of Rights, initially applicable only as against the federal government, should be incorporated against the States. And, in *Gideon*, Justice Black finally turned the Court to his side and won the “incorporation” debate for all time. Professor Amar’s synopsis led us into a discussion between Judge Williams (formerly our Public Defender) and Judge

Scola (our District's long-serving representative on the Judicial Conference Committee for Defender Services) about the important role the Judiciary must continue to play in securing *Gideon's* promise.

All in all, the 2023 Bench and Bar Conference gave us (the judges and lawyers of the Southern District of Florida) a much-welcome opportunity to eat, drink, and laugh together. But the conference also left some questions unanswered: *Who* won the debate between Neal Katyal and Miguel Estrada on pre-enforcement challenges? *Why* was Judge Scola wearing only *part* of a seersucker suit? And *how* did we manage to affix our Court's logo onto the froth that adorned *every* cappuccino we served? For the answers to these and other burning questions, we'll see you in 2025.



JOIN US!

If you're not an FBA member, or if your membership has lapsed, use [this link](#) to join us today.

We look forward to getting to know you!

President's Message

From Stephanie Turk, President

The South Florida Chapter of the Federal Bar Association continues to thrive as the third largest FBA Chapter in the country and the largest in the Eleventh Circuit.

This year, we are focused on innovative ways to add value to membership in our Chapter.

To begin, we wanted to ensure our two annual signature events were fresh and fun. We kicked off our annual signature events with our Awards & Installation Dinner at the Four Seasons on October 21, 2023. This year's event had a contemporary twist - it was a Saturday evening gala with a "Sneaker Ball" theme. We also tied in a service component to the event - and solicited donations for new children's sneakers, which were donated to the Foundation for New Education Initiatives for the many homeless children who attend our schools in Miami-Dade County. This year was also particularly meaningful as we honored the late and beloved Judge Marcia G. Cooke with our Chapter's highest honor, the Edward B. Davis Award. Please visit our Chapter website (www.fba-sdfla.org) to watch the beautiful video tribute to Judge Cooke.



Our other annual event, the Judicial Reception, was also well attended and successful. This year, we held the event at the Penthouse at Riverside Wharf on February 1, 2024. Many thanks to the approximately 20 federal judges, 60 federal law clerks, many special guests and elected officials, and more than 400 people who attended the event!

As for new ways of adding value to our membership, our Chapter will begin to recognize our newest members on a quarterly basis on our Chapter website and through social media.

Our Chapter has also recently established an Appellate Committee, which will work to produce summaries of key Eleventh Circuit decisions for our members.

Additionally, we recently hosted a Membership Social on March 7, 2024, at American Social Brickell, to provide another opportunity for potential members to mingle with current members. Collectively, our social events are one example of the many benefits of membership in our Chapter.

Lastly, we have strived to create more opportunities to:

learn through more meaningful CLE programs, including those specifically designed to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion;

socialize through additional social events throughout the year; and

help the community through our continued commitment to civics education and outreach, and our new focus on community service projects. (Continued...)

In the spirit of giving back, please consider purchasing a book through our virtual book drive. The link can be found on our website under Upcoming Events. All books purchased through this link will be donated to Amber's Room, an afterschool program in Liberty City.

On behalf of the entire South Florida Chapter, thank you for your continued support. We could not do this "good work" without you. If you have any questions, comments, or recommendations regarding our Chapter, please email me directly at: sturk@stearnsweaver.com. Thank you for entrusting me to lead and serve this great organization. I look forward to seeing you at a future event!

Farewell from Our Past President

From Tal Lifshitz, Past President



Leading this organization, the South Florida Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, for the past year has been one of the highlights of my professional career. As I reflect on my years of involvement with the FBA (and this past year in particular), I'm filled with pride for the past, excitement for the future, and an overwhelming sense of calm and accomplishment as I appreciate "the moment" of the end of my term – and (bittersweetly) celebrate the installation and presidential term of my good friend, Stephanie Turk.

We've done so much together this year. Our premier annual event, the judicial reception, was a smashing success at a new venue with record attendance. We built upon and continued to strengthen our nationally recognized CD3 civics program, which is now a roadmap for federal judicial districts across the country. We promoted a summer internship experience for law students, the Judicial Intern Academy, which now similarly serves as a blueprint for districts nationwide. We put on great and timely programs, with respected industry leaders from across the country – including supporting the Southern District to promote the 2023 Bench and Bar Conference, another overwhelming success that broke the Conference's all-time attendance records with over 1,000 attendees. We maintained our focus on and commitment to diversity. We successfully recruited dozens of law students, judicial law clerks, and young lawyers to join us – no doubt the foundation of the future of our organization. And we harnessed technology and social media to establish ourselves as leaders of innovation in our community and across the country. We did great big things, and left a mark on this chapter that I hope will be felt for decades to come.

And there's more to do. I trust no one more than Stephanie Turk, our incoming president, to be our best President yet.

*The South Florida Chapter expresses immense gratitude
for Tal's leadership during his term as President.
We look forward to his continued involvement and friendship.*

2023 Awards and Installation Dinner

By Erica Zaron

The South Florida Chapter of the Federal Bar Association held its Awards and Installation Dinner on October 21, 2023, at the Four Seasons Hotel Miami. For the first time ever, the event was held on a Saturday night. Continuing the chapter's commitment to exploring new and exciting ways to engage members of the bench and bar, the theme for the evening was "Sneaker Ball." Well over 200 lawyers and judges arrived at the Four Seasons dressed in formal wear all the way down to their ankles, which is where the real fun began. From retro kicks to light-up sneaker soles to shoelaces that matched evening gowns, the variety of sneakers kept everyone entertained and comfortable all evening long.



The evening began with a cocktail hour featuring delicious drinks and hors d'oeuvres, an FBA-themed step-and-repeat, and the opportunity to pose and be photographed with a living Lady Justice. Immediately following cocktail hour was the true highlight of the evening, a meaningful tribute to the late District Judge Marcia G. Cooke, recipient of the Edward B. Davis ("NED") award, the chapter's highest honor. The tribute featured a touching video presentation in which Judge Cooke's closest friends and colleagues commented on her contributions to the legal field and their lives. District Judge Kathleen M. Williams then spoke about Judge Cooke's impact on her own life before presenting the NED award to Judge Cooke's sister, Delois Spryszak. The program ended with District Judge Beth Bloom swearing in the FBA board of directors and officers, including our new President, Stephanie Turk.



From there, the party moved to the main ballroom, and the culinary highlight of the evening: open fire-cooked tomahawk steaks. Revelers danced for hours, clearly more comfortable in their sneakers. Also in keeping with the sneaker theme, attendees donated 75 pairs of children's sneakers to the Foundation for New Education Initiatives. FNEI provides clothes and supplies to homeless students attending Miami-Dade County public schools. Each pair of sneakers donated earned the donor a raffle ticket, and in the middle of the evening a basketball signed by the entire 2023 Eastern Conference Champion Miami Heat team was awarded to a lucky winner! This was the first time in memory that the Chapter included a philanthropic component at this event, and it is sure to continue the tradition for years to come.

PAST EVENTS

Judicial Ethics and the Role of Federal Judges in 21st Century America, May 11, 2023. The South Florida Chapter hosted an event on the topic of judicial ethics, featuring Judges Roy K. Altman and Raag Singhal of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida. With federal judges and their rulings receiving more scrutiny now than ever, questions arise about the role of federal judges in the public discourse. In this conversation, the judges addressed differing views on how active federal judges should be in the public discourse and the ethical considerations involved.

Newsletter Editor

Meaghan Goldstein

Have a suggestion for future newsletter content?

Email the committee at
Federalbar.southflorida@
gmail.com

Attn: Newsletter
Committee

Malice in Wonderland: Today's Changing Defamation Landscape, May 15, 2023. Co-sponsored by the South Florida Chapter, the FBA Federal Litigation Section, FBA Civil Rights Section, Northern California Chapter, and the Puerto Rico Chapter, the Middle District of Pennsylvania Chapter presented the next installment of its acclaimed CLE series—a two-hour, virtual program entitled “Malice in Wonderland: Today’s Changing Defamation Landscape.” The panel – moderated by Robert Costa, Chief Election & Campaign correspondent for *CBS News*, and included Ben Chew (Co-Chair of the Brand & Reputation Management Group at Brown Rudnick LLP), Tom Hentoff (Co-Chair of Williams & Connolly’s First Amendment & Media practice group and its Trademark and Copyright practice group), David McCraw (Senior Vice President and Deputy General Counsel for *The New York Times*), and Kelli Sager (partner in Davis Wright Tremaine LLP’s Los Angeles Office) – briefly educated the audience on foundational principles of First Amendment and defamation law and the anatomy of a libel lawsuit before diving into current trends in defamation litigation, including the uptick in suits by public figures and high-profile individuals and the emergence of ideology-driven defamation suits.

Settlement Conferences in Federal Court, May 19, 2023. The South Florida Chapter presented a seminar discussing settlement conferences in federal court. The panel featured U.S. Magistrate Judge Hope Cannon, U.S. Magistrate Judge Embry Kidd, U.S. Magistrate Judge William Matthewman, and U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Jacob Brown, and was moderated by Bernice Lee (Partner at Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton) and Ginger Boyd (Partner at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP).

Federal Judicial Clerk Recruiting Reception, May 25, 2023. The Federal Law Clerk Committees of the Broward, South Florida, and Palm Beach Chapters hosted the Fifth Annual Federal Judicial Clerk Recruiting Reception. This event provides a great opportunity for pairing former federal judicial law clerks, looking to explore the South Florida legal market, with public and private legal organizations and public interest organizations located in the Southern District of Florida.

June Boardroom Lunch with US Attorney Markenzy Lapointe, June 12, 2022. The South Florida Chapter featured newly appointed United States Attorney Markenzy Lapointe for its June Boardroom Series Luncheon. An intimate group of South Florida Chapter members had the opportunity to dine with US Attorney Markenzy Lapointe and hear his insights about his new appointment.

July Boardroom Lunch with Chief Magistrate Judge Edwin G. Torres and Magistrate Judge Eduardo I. Sanchez, July 18, 2023. The Miami Foundation kindly hosted the South Florida Chapter for its July Boardroom Series Luncheon featuring the Honorable Chief Magistrate Judge Edwin G. Torres and Magistrate Judge Eduardo I. Sanchez. An intimate group of South Florida Chapter members had the opportunity to dine with Chief Magistrate Judge Torres and Magistrate Judge Sanchez and hear their insights about litigating before federal magistrate judges.

August Boardroom Lunch with Curtis Miner and Larry Silverman, August 30, 2023. Colson Hicks Eidson graciously hosted the South Florida Chapter for its August Boardroom Series Luncheon featuring Curtis Miner of Colson Hicks Eidson, and Larry Silverman of Sidley Austin. In a question-and-answer format, the featured guests discussed their involvement in prominent cases and pending MDLs in this District, which offered an insightful opportunity to learn and connect with other lawyers in this field from both sides of the “v”.



2023 Bench and Bar Conference, September 8, 2023. The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida – in conjunction with the South Florida, Broward, and Palm Beach Chapters of the Federal Bar Association – held its Sixth Biennial Bench and Bar Conference at the Miami Beach Convention Center. The Conference offered attendees a unique opportunity to interact with the judges of the Southern District of Florida while earning CLE credits and networking with colleagues. The Conference included a day-long program of panel discussions on a variety of matters of interest to federal practitioners. Notably, the event kicked off with a Supreme Court Roundup featuring Miguel A. Estrada and Neal Katyal, and concluded with a thoughtful panel discussion marking the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision, featuring Yale Law Professor Akhil Reed Amar, the Honorable Kathleen M. Williams, and the Honorable Robert N. Scola, Jr., moderated by attorney David Howard. The Conference also featured a keynote lunch panel titled, “Human Trafficking and the Lawyer’s Role in Protecting the Most Vulnerable Members of Our Community.”

Hoy Como Ayer: Hispanic Leadership in Our Community, September 20, 2023. The Judges of the United States District Court Southern District of Florida hosted their 2023 Hispanic Heritage Month Program. The Program included a panel discussion with The Honorable Adalberto Jordan, United States Circuit Judge, Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals; The Honorable Barbara Lagoa, United States Circuit Judge, Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals; Cesar L. Alvarez, Esq., Senior Chairman, Greenberg Traurig; Beatriz Azcuy, Esq., Co-Managing Partner, Miami Office, Sidley Austin; Roberto Martinez, Esq., Partner, Colson Hicks Eidson; Marissel Descalzo, Esq., Partner, Tache, Bronis and Descalzo, moderated by United States Bankruptcy Judge Corali Lopez-Castro. The esteemed panelists discussed their paths to leadership and the experiences leadership has afforded them.

Pathways to Federal Clerkships, October 3, 2023. The South Florida Chapter, along with the Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr. Bar Association and Stearns Weaver Miller, heard from United States District Judge Beth Bloom, United States Magistrate Judge Shaniek Mills Maynard, and United States District Judge Darrin Gayles of the Southern District of Florida about their insights on how to effectively apply for and obtain a federal clerkship.

Supreme Court Expert Amy Howe, November 16, 2023. We welcomed back host reporter and former editor of SCOTUSblog, Amy Howe, for our annual update on happenings at the United States Supreme Court. This

event never disappoints. A sold-out crowd enjoyed Ms. Howe's insight on the Supreme Court's 2023–2024 term.

SEC Crypto Asset Enforcement: Perspectives from the Inside, December 13, 2023. Our members gathered for an insightful panel discussion with Jessica M. Weissman, Assistant Regional Director of the Crypto Assets and Cyber Unit, and Alex Charap, Senior Counsel for the Crypto Assets and Cyber Unit, both of the Securities and Exchange Commission Division of Enforcement.



2024 Judicial Reception, February 1, 2024. We sold out the Penthouse! A packed house ate, chatted with, and toasted our federal judges. As always, this event was one of the highlights of the year. Many thanks to our sponsors who made the night possible, and to the members of our bench who are so supportive of our Chapter events.

Tenants' Equal Justice Clinic, February 8, 2024. This unique clinic is designed for pro bono attorneys to give free legal advice to low-income individuals whose landlord has not returned a security deposit or clients who are living in unsuitable, unsafe, or unhealthy living conditions. Attorneys had the opportunity to assist with initiating pro se Small Claims Court cases or drafting letters to help address legal issues that impede clients' access to stable housing.

Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions, February 15 and January 18, 2024, and December 12, November 14, and October 18, 2023. Judge Huck, Judge Altman, Judge Louis, Judge Otazo-Reyes, and Judge Goodman each presided over CD3 events, hosting students from Barbara Goleman Senior High School, Miami Central Senior High School, Hialeah Gardens Senior High School, and Southwest Miami Senior High School. These are remarkable events, where the young members of our community showcase their preparation, advocacy, and legal curiosity before distinguished members of our federal bench. Many thanks to Jessica Neer McDonald, Alaina Fotiu-Wojtowicz, Erica Zaron, Yaniv Adar, Ana Kaufmann, Meaghan Goldstein, Brantley Mayers, Yisel Valdes, Stephanie Casey, Abigail Becker, Ephraim Abreu, Katie Miesner, Andrew Balthazor, Enjoliqué Lett, Courtney Cunningham, Katie Mitchell, Luis Reyes, Jordan Grana, Carmen Cartaya, Lisa Roberts, David Howard, Kristin Oakley, Tito Adewunmi, and Lance Aduba for facilitating these learning experiences.

Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Practice, February 20, 2024. Jessica Neer McDonald hosted a great fireside chat with attorney Frank Ramos, who spoke to attorneys about the growing role of artificial intelligence in the legal world and what practitioners should be aware of as technologies continue to evolve.

Historic Lyric Theater Tour, February 21, 2024. In recognition of Black History Month, the Federal Bar Association South Florida Chapter hosted an in-person guided tour of the Black Archives at the Historic Lyric Theater. Founded in 1977 by Dr. Dorothy Jenkins Fields, the Black Archives is a rich repository of historical materials documenting the African American experience in Miami-Dade County during the 19th and 20th centuries. The Black Archives are housed within the newly renovated Historic Lyric Theater, a landmark on the National Register of Historic Places and a symbol of Overtown's black economic influence in Miami. Special thanks to Laselve Harrison for organizing this tour.

FBA Membership Social, March 7, 2024. We had a great turnout of current and future members at American Social. Our Chapter is proud of its membership numbers and we hope to keep seeing new members enroll!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Equality and Empowerment Summit, April 2, 2024. Please join our Chapter as we celebrate International Women's Day and Equal Pay Day on April 2, 2024, between 3:00 p.m. and 5:30p.m. at White & Case LLP, located at Southeast Financial Center, 200 South Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 4900, Miami, Florida 33131. The half-day program will feature several guest speakers and cover topics including equality in seeking and keeping wealth, the significant benefit of diversity on trial teams, and the increasing number of women involved in complex litigation and receiverships.

Federal Law Clerk Happy Hour, April 4, 2024. Calling all past and present federal law clerks! Please join us for a happy hour at Over Under, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. This is a great opportunity to reminisce, network, and catch up with old and new colleagues.

Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions, April 5, 2024. Judge Bloom will host the Miami-Dade Urban Debate League for a CD3 session in her courtroom. We look forward to seeing our young community members shine as they practice their oral advocacy skills.

Judicial Law Clerk Recruiting Reception, April 18, 2024. This annual event is sponsored jointly by the South Florida, Broward County, and Palm Beach County chapters. Stay tuned – location to be announced!

Law Day, May 17, 2024. Judge Gayles will host high school students from across Miami-Dade County for our annual Law Day celebration. We need attorney volunteers to help with this event. Please contact Stephanie Turk or Yisel Valdes for more information.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

We have much to celebrate in our ranks! Please join us in congratulating the following members of our Chapter for their exciting accomplishments.

Judge Jacqueline Becerra, Judge Melissa Damian, and Judge David S. Leibowitz. We are thrilled to welcome three brilliant jurists to our federal bench in the Southern District of Florida. Congratulations!

Community Outreach Grant. Our Chapter has received a \$4,000 Community Outreach Grant from the Foundation of the Federal Bar Association. Thank you to the FBA, and special thanks to Yisel Valdes for taking the lead on our application.

Judge Beth Bloom and Judge Robin Rosenberg. Congratulations to Judge Bloom and Judge Rosenberg, who were honored with the Distinguished Federal Judicial Service Pro Bono Award, presented by Chief Justice Carlos G. Muñiz of the Florida Supreme Court.

Chapter Awards. Our Chapter won two awards at the FBA's 2023 Annual Meeting and Convention: the

Chapter Activity Award – Presidential Excellence, which recognizes the highest level of success, and the Chapter Community Outreach Award, which is given to only one chapter each year. We look forward to continuing our tradition of excellence and effective outreach.

Judge Darrin Gayles. Congratulations to Judge Gayles, who was appointed by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts as the Chair of the National Committee on Federal-State Jurisdiction. We're very proud of this recognition.

Judge John O'Sullivan. Judge O'Sullivan was selected as the recipient of the 2023 Miami Catholic Lawyers Guild's *Lex Christi, Lex Amoris* award, presented to him by Archbishop Thomas Wenski.