

LAWCROSSING'S  
TOP 100  
AMERICAN LAW STARS



**LAWCROSSING™**

THE LARGEST COLLECTION OF LEGAL JOBS ON EARTH

# LawCrossing's Top 100 American Law Stars

by LawCrossing

## LawCrossing

175 South Lake Avenue

Suite 200

Pasadena, CA 91101

(213) 895-7300

(800) 973-1177

(213) 895-7306 (fax)

contact@lawcrossing.com

Visit our website at ***www.lawcrossing.com*** for more information on our services and products.

No portion of this book may be reproduced or transmitted without the express written consent of the publisher.

While the publisher has endeavored to provide accurate and up-to-date information, it makes no representations or warranties with respect to the contents of this book. LawCrossing Group may not be held liable for any loss or damage resulting from use of the information herein.

ISBN:

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

## **Table of Contents**

Dorothy W. Nelson: Senior Judge, United States Court of Appeals 9th Circuit and Chair and Founder of Western Justice Center Foundation, Pasadena, CA	Page 7
Marci A. Hamilton: Author, God vs. the Gavel: Religion and the Rule of Law	Page 11
Constance Istratescu: Supervising Attorney, Orange County (CA) Public Defender's Office, Writs and Appeals Unit	Page 14
Van Jones; Founder and National Executive Director, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights; Oakland, CA	Page 17
Karen Harned: Executive Director, NFIB Legal Foundation, Washington, DC	Page 20
Gloria Allred, High-Profile Attorney and Author of Fight Back and Win	Page 23
Amy Lin Meyerson: President, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association	Page 27
F. Lee Bailey, Chairman and CEO of IMPAC Control Systems, Inc.	Page 30
Jayashri Srikantiah; Director of the Immigrants' Rights Clinic and Associate Professor of Law, Stanford Law School	Page 33
Steve Cooley, Los Angeles County District Attorney	Page 36
Arthur Gilbert, Presiding Justice of Division 6 of the California Courts of Appeal, Second District	Page 40
David Wohl; Lawyer, Legal Analyst, and Investigative Reporter; CBS2; Los Angeles	Page 43
Michael Greco, President, American Bar Association	Page 46
Alex Kozinski	Page 49
Esther Lardent President and CEO of the Pro Bono Institute, Washington, DC Adjunct Professor of Law at Georgetown University Fulbright Fellow	Page 52
Lanny Davis, Partner, "Legal Crisis Communications" practice group, Orrick, Washington, DC	Page 56
Samuel Estreicher, Professor, New York University School of Law	Page 59

Henry Miller; Senior Partner; Clark,  
 Gagliardi & Miller, P.C. [Page 62](#)

Thomas A. Mesereau, Jr. [Page 65](#)

Donald B. Verrilli, Partner, Jenner & Block,  
 Washington, DC [Page 68](#)

Cosar Perales [Page 71](#)

Molly Munger, Co-Director Advancement Project,  
 Los Angeles [Page 74](#)

Jameel Jaffer, American Civil Liberties Union [Page 77](#)

Thomas Goldstein, founding partner Goldstein & Howe Supreme  
 attorney specializes in Supreme Court [Page 80](#)

David H. Steinberg Slacking Pays Off for  
 Lawyer Turned Screenwriter [Page 83](#)

Anne Tompkins, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Charlotte, NC, and former  
 Regime Crimes Liaison Officer, Iraq Federal prosecutor helps  
 build case against Saddam Hussein [Page 86](#)

Michael R. McAleve, Chief Corporate and Securities Counsel,  
 General Electric Co. Risk taking: the key to securities law [Page 89](#)

Thomas L. Shaffer [Page 92](#)

Kenneth W. Starr [Page 95](#)

Frank K. Wheaton [Page 98](#)

David Lehman, Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel of  
 the National Rifle Association's Institute for  
 Legislative Action [Page 102](#)

Dennis Henigan, The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence,  
 Director of its Legal Action Project [Page 105](#)

Teveia Barnes, President of Lawyers For One America [Page 108](#)

New Year brings new firm for legendary  
 lawyer Plato Cacheris [Page 111](#)

Lawyer becomes top stem-cell advocate [Page 114](#)

Lawyer's Life Packed With International Intrigue [Page 118](#)

Lawyer Makes Business Look Like a Piece of Cake [Page 122](#)

Lawyer Tracks Priests Accused of Sexual Misconduct To  
 Prevent More Cases of Abuse [Page 125](#)

Matt Murphy, Senior Deputy District Attorney,  
 Orange County, California [Page 128](#)

Jed Babbin, attorney, column writer and author of Inside the Asylum, Why the United Nations and Old Europe are Worse than You Think	Page 131
Hauwa Ibrahim, Senior and Founding Partner in the ARIES Law Firm in Abuja, Nigeria	Page 134
Robert J. Grey, Jr., American Bar Association President	Page 136
Sarah Weddington, Esq.	Page 138
Jeffrey Hughes, Owner, Legal Grind	Page 142
Michael Ratner - President, Center for Constitutional Rights	Page 146
David Boies, Managing Partner, Boies, Schiller & Flexner	Page 149
William H. Taft, IV, Legal Adviser to the Secretary of State	Page 152
Pamela Mackey	Page 159
Professor Harold Hongju Koh, Yale Law School, Dean-Designate	Page 163
Catherine Crier, Court TV Anchor	Page 173
Paul G. Pastorek, NASA General Counsel	Page 177
Michael H. Posner, executive director, Human Rights First	Page 185
Dr. Azizah al-Hibri, KARAMAH	Page 192
Johnnie Cochran	Page 199
John W. Carlin, Archivist of the United States	Page 204
John Edwards: The “Accidental” Candidate	Page 210
Gail A. Lione	Page 214
Justice William Bedsworth	Page 219
Dennis Archer	Page 224
Robert Corn-Revere	Page 230
Jay Alan Sekulow	Page 233
Phil Corboy	Page 237
Bill Clinton	Page 244
Scott Turow	Page 249
Christine Lagarde	Page 253
Brian O’Neill, Partner, Faegre & Benson, LLP	Page 258
Robert “Bob” Barnett, Partner, Williams and Connolly LLP	Page 264
James C. Nelson - Justice, Montana Supreme Court	Page 267

Luis A. Aguilar, Partner, Alston & Bird	Page 274
Jan M. Conlin, Partner Robins Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi	Page 281
Jack Levin, Senior Partner, Kirkland & Ellis	Page 287
Evan Wolfson, Executive Director, Freedom to Marry	Page 293
Matt Daniels, President, The Alliance for Marriage	Page 297
Greg S. Bernstein, Entertainment Attorney, Law Offices Of Greg S. Bernstein	Page 301
Rita Lowery Gitchell, Former President, National Lawyers Association	Page 304
Gay McDougall, Executive Director Global Rights, Partners for Justice	Page 308
Frank Dunham, Jr., Federal Public Defender, Eastern District of Virginia	Page 311
Leonard Van Slyke	Page 314
Jeffrey Fisher, Partner, Davis Wright Tremaine, Seattle	Page 317
Therese “Teri” Cannon: Law school dean and author stays close to paralegal roots	Page 320
Dan Grunfeld, Public Counsel President and CEO	Page 323
Karen Barth Menzies battles to change this Prozac nation	Page 326
Terry Gross, Partner, Gross & Belsky, and Internet Law Pioneer	Page 330
LaRissa D. Hollingsworth, Associate, Rhoades McKee, Grand Rapids, Michigan	Page 333
Sorrell Trope, Founder of Trope and Trope, and Family Law Pioneer	Page 336
Michele A. Roberts, partner, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP	Page 339
Gregory Jordan, Managing Partner, Reed Smith	Page 342
Jay Dougherty, Professor of Law at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles	Page 345
Christopher Landau, Partner, Kirkland & Ellis, LLP	Page 348
M. Amera Alhandy, Dean, University of West Los Angeles School of Paralegal Studies	Page 351
Steven Shaw, Lawyer-Turned-Author and Founder of eGullet.com and thefatguy.com	Page 354

Anne Auten, Partner, DLA Piper Rudnick  
Gray Cary, Chicago [Page 357](#)

Terry D. Avchen; Senior Partner and Chair of the Environmental  
Practice Group; Christensen, Miller, Fink, Jacobs, Glaser, Weil &  
Shapiro, LLP; Los Angeles [Page 359](#)

Carolyn Elefant, Sole Practitioner, Washington, DC [Page 362](#)

Profile Peter Fleming, Jr.; Head of the Litigation Department;  
Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt & Mosle, LLP [Page 365](#)

Marcia Robinson Lowry, Founder and Executive  
Director of Children's Rights [Page 368](#)

Anne M. Schneiderman, Ph.D., Law Offices of Anne Schneiderman  
and Of Counsel to Wall Marjama & Bilinski, LLP [Page 371](#)

Michael Paranzino, President of Throw Away The Key [Page 374](#)

Kim Martin Lewis, Partner, Dinsmore & Shohl,  
Cincinnati, OH [Page 377](#)

Robert Luskin, Partner, Patton Boggs, Washington, DC [Page 380](#)





## **Dorothy W. Nelson: Senior Judge, United States Court of Appeals 9th Circuit and Chair and Founder of Western Justice Center Foundation, Pasadena, CA**

*By Kenneth Davis*



Judge Dorothy Nelson has set the legal world ablaze, excelling in a number of different areas of law. However, she didn't originally plan to make a career in the legal field. Her decision to go into law happened unexpectedly and was motivated by a desire to help others.

"My first inclination was to be a social worker," she said. "After World War II, when I was leader of a boys' club for underprivileged eight-year olds, I found that when I observed and complained to authorities about their special needs (health, food, parental inadequacies), I was told that 'the law says this or that.' I decided that...lawyers appeared to have the inside edge."

Nelson, 77, added that she wanted to be in a profession that aims "to serve other people."

"Lawyers have the training and skills to bring about real change in society and assist others," she said.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in political science from UCLA in 1950, Nelson set about launching her legal career. In 1953, she earned her law degree from UCLA School of Law and was admitted to the State Bar of California the following year. For her first job out of law school, she worked as a research associate at the University of Southern California Law School. She worked alongside USC law professor James Holbrook on a project to investigate the courts in Los Angeles and recommend improvements. The study, which took three years to complete, was titled "Survey of Metropolitan Courts—Los Angeles Area."

"We recommended 32 changes...to the State Legislature, most of which were adopted," she said.

Nelson added that some of those changes included the creation of a Court Executive Officer, the consolidation of courts, the improvement of juror pay, and the keeping of court statistics.

Nelson went on to receive her Master of Laws degree from the University of Southern California Law School in 1956. The following year she joined the school's faculty to become USC's first woman law professor. During her tenure as law professor, she was also involved in number of other law-related activities. She was involved in private practice, handling family, juvenile, and adoption matters. She also formed two major corporations, Woolstone, Inc. and California Limestone, and did all their legal work. In addition, she served on the Federal Indigent Defense Panel and wrote trusts and wills.

"But teaching and writing were my main activities," she said.

Nelson thrived at USC Law School. She was named its interim dean in 1967 and dean in 1969, becoming the first woman dean of a major American law school. After Nelson served ten years as dean, President Jimmy Carter appointed her to the United States Court of Appeals 9th District in 1979. She assumed senior status on the court in 1995.

In addition to her academic and judicial trailblazing, Nelson was one of the early proponents of alternative dispute resolution and believed that mediation was a viable alternative to litigation.

"As a member of the Baha'i Faith, I believe that one of the best ways to resolve conflict is through consultation or mediation rather than the adversary system," she said. "I began teaching about mediation and arbitration and other forms of appropriate dispute resolution (ADR-some say alternative dispute resolution) in the early 1960s before it was being taught elsewhere."

As interim dean in 1967, Nelson helped establish a dispute resolution center at USC Law School. She said it was the first dispute resolution center in a law school anywhere in the country. Nelson also assisted in founding a number of other organizations.

"While Dean, we established the Western Center on Law and Poverty (in conjunction with UCLA and Loyola Law Schools); the Chicano Law Center; the Center on Law and Aging (with the School of Gerontology); and the Center for Preventive Law, etc., etc.," she said.

In 1985, Nelson and a group of attorneys and judges established the Western Justice Center Foundation. The initial plan was to make use of the bungalows adjoining the 9th Circuit Courthouse in Pasadena and place tenants there that would be compatible to the courthouse.

"When the bungalows we were in were designated surplus property in 1985, and Chief Judge [James R.] Browning asked Judge [Anthony M.] Kennedy [now a U.S. Supreme Court Justice] to come up with ideas for compatible tenants, the idea for the Western Justice Center Foundation was born," she

said. “Judge Kennedy went off to Washington, D.C.; and I asked a group of prominent lawyers and judges to join me in forming a nonprofit corporation called the Western Justice Center Foundation to develop a research center to promote peaceful resolution of conflict among children, courts, community and government.”

Nelson said that when she was a dean at USC Law School, she had always wanted to develop such a center in the western part of the United States.

“In the words of former Chief Justice Burger, litigation is fine for some cases, but to think it is appropriate for all cases is a mistake,” she said. “Our adversary system is too costly, too inefficient, too painful, and too destructive for a civilized society.”

Since its founding, the Western Justice Center Foundation has developed a number of programs designed to teach peaceful conflict resolution to children, youth, parents, teachers, administrators and community members. Included among these programs are the Children’s Workshop, Models of Unity Program, Court Workshops, Peer Mediation Invitational and Creative Classroom Management, which Nelson said is “for K-6 teachers to infuse conflict resolution education throughout the curriculum and to maximize child-centered problem solving.”

Recently, the Foundation collaborated with the Pasadena Police Department and the Los Angeles County Bar Association Dispute Resolution Services to launch a mediation and dialogue program designed to improve relationships between the police department and the community. The program provides an opportunity for citizens and members of the Pasadena Police Department to engage in open dialogue through mediation sessions. It combines individual mediations of citizen complaints against the police and larger dialogues between community members and members of the Pasadena Police Department.

“It is tremendously rewarding to help people and groups resolve conflict of all kinds through consultation, mediation, and dialogue,” said Nelson, whose goal is “to always have a win-win situation rather than a win-lose situation.”

Nelson, who is also chair of the 9th Circuit’s Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee, said that her biggest influences have been Roscoe Pound, former dean of Harvard Law School, her husband and her religion the Bahai’i Faith, which she said teaches the principle of consultation to resolve conflict.

As an appellate judge, Nelson sits on the bench one week in a month and hears 30 to 35 cases, which last 10 to 20 minutes per side. She writes opinions during the remainder of the month. She said that she and the other appellate judges hear a variety of cases.

“We handle everything from serious criminal cases (capital cases, drug cases, rape, robbery, murder, pornography, etc.) to immigration cases, constitutional law cases, commercial cases, employment discrimination cases, environmental cases, Clean Water Act cases, Voting Rights cases, etc.,” she said.

Nelson said that what she likes most about being an appellate judge is that she is able to contribute to making the “American judicial system the best in the world and being able to significantly affect the lives of others.” She added that she also really likes working with her law clerks.

“I enjoy my three law clerks immensely as one of the best parts of the job,” she said. “They come from outstanding law schools and assist in my research and writing and in preparing for my court calendars. They are a source of continuing education for me, for they have had courses with the most prominent and accomplished law professors in the United States.”

She said that some of the most difficult challenges she faces as an appellate judge are having a “heavy caseload, [not] having enough time to do adequate research when briefs are not as good as they should be, and balancing public-service demands on my time with court and family demands.”

Nelson said that she considers the most important issue facing the legal community today to be giving the community access to a justice system, not necessarily courts, that will provide a fair resolution of disputes and solve problems.

Nelson advised law students to get involved in their communities.

“Become active in your community so that you will understand its needs; and mold your aspirations to bringing about peaceful resolution to conflict, which will lead ultimately to a peaceful society,” she said.

## Marci A. Hamilton: Author, *God vs. the Gavel: Religion and the Rule of Law*

By Charisse Dengler



Author of *God vs. the Gavel: Religion and the Rule of Law* and an expert on constitutional and copyright law, Marci A. Hamilton said it was her involvement in *Boerne v. Flores* that ultimately determined the path of her career. Ever since the landmark case, she has been devoted to issues involving the separatizon of church and state.

Upon graduation from Penn Law School in 1988, where she graduated *magna cum laude* and served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Penn Law Review*, Hamilton clerked for Judge Edward R. Becker and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. She then began teaching and helped found the Cardozo School of Law (Yeshiva University) Intellectual Property Law Program, serving as the program's director until passing it on to Professor Justin Hughes.

Currently, she holds the position of Paul R. Verkuil Chair in Public Law, teaches at the law school, and spends her sabbaticals at Princeton Theological Seminary. In addition, she is a wife and a dedicated mother of two, and she's also busy working on another book.

"Finding the time in the day to do all that is necessary to do the best I possibly can, while preserving my best time for my family [is one of the more difficult things about being a lawyer]," she said. "I am very fortunate because both Judge Becker and Justice O'Connor set sterling examples of dedication to their careers coupled with intense family devotion."

Hamilton, who was the lead litigator before the U.S. Supreme Court for the City of Boerne, TX, in *h*, refers to her involvement in the case as life-changing.

"The question in the case was whether the Religious Freedom Restoration Act [RFRA] was constitutional," she said. "Our team—which included Lowell Denton, a great attorney in San Antonio, TX, and local city attorney Gordon Hollon, who has unfortunately passed away— was successful in persuading the Court that RFRA was unconstitutional because it violated federalism—sometimes called states' rights—and was an attempt to amend the First Amendment through simple majority vote."

Hamilton wrote one of the first articles to attack RFRA's constitutionality, which appeared in the *Cardozo Law Review*. Denton, Boerne's city attorney, contacted her when he learned her article was forthcoming. It was her involvement in the case that led her to write *God vs. the Gavel*, a book that deals with the controversial subject of separation of church and state.

"The first half of *God vs. the Gavel* documents the reality that religious entities harm others and that, too often, they do so with legal protection," Hamilton said. "For example, children in faith-healing homes have been medically neglected to their deaths in states where there are religious exemptions to the medical neglect laws."

"It is to be expected that religious entities lobby elected representatives and flex their muscle," she continued. "The problem with the system is that elected representatives fail to ask the hard questions when they are approached by a religious entity. They blindly assume that if it is good for religion, it is good for society. *God vs. the Gavel* establishes that that is not true empirically, and, therefore, the right rule is to apply the laws that apply to everyone else to religious entities. Exemptions for religiously motivated action are only deserved where the conduct permitted does not harm others."

In the first chapter of the book, Hamilton explains her switch from being a person who believed in strong protection of religious entities to being someone whose career is dedicated to both monitoring and fighting religious entities that have too much freedom to harm.

"My work with RFRA in the Boerne case brought me into contact with many groups that lobby against religious entities in various contexts, including many children's advocates," she said. "The more I learned about the dark side of religious entities in American culture and the harm they are capable of generating, the more devoted I became to ensuring that the United States hold them accountable for the harm they do. Personal responsibility is the American way, after all."

Hamilton is currently an advisor to clergy-abuse victims around the nation on constitutional issues, and she also advises Congress and state legislatures on pending legislation.

"Most recently, I have testified in numerous states regarding the constitutionality of legislation intended to aid victims of childhood sexual abuse," she said.

Led to the field of law by admiration for her grandfather, William Wehrli, who was the Casper, WY, City Attorney during Prohibition and who represented Wyoming in a water rights case before the Supreme Court, Hamilton thoroughly enjoys her choice of profession.

"Lawyers are very lucky because they have an endless variety of mental challenges before them," she said. "There is interesting variety within individual arenas—intellectual property, corporate, tax,

or real estate. But lawyers also have a greater capacity than other professionals to change course if that is where their hearts take them. For myself, it is a very satisfying blend of intellectual challenge, practical problem solving, and real-world issues.”

## Constance Istratescu: Supervising Attorney, Orange County (CA) Public Defender's Office, Writs and Appeals Unit

*By Charisse Dengler*



As a public defender specializing in gang cases, Constance Istratescu is appointed to represent defendants in criminal cases, a responsibility that is certainly not for everyone. If you question her choice of profession, though, she's quick to set you straight.

'People often ask me after I tell them what I do, 'How can you defend all those criminals?'" she said. "I tell them, 'My job is to keep the government honest after it charges a person with a crime and that person is in danger of losing his or her liberty. There is no reason to be so trustful of government, because historically government has taken the form of monarchy, theocracy, oligarchy, and dictatorship. A person could be sentenced to death without proof of any wrongdoing; remember the Inquisition and the Salem witchcraft trials?' After that, they don't find my job choice so confusing."

Istratescu joined the Public Defender's Office in 1986. Since then, she has worked juvenile court, misdemeanor trials, felony preliminary hearings, and the felony trial panel. She later joined the Associate Defender's Office and the Alternate Defender's Office, where she is currently the supervising attorney in the Writs and Appeals Unit.

Istratescu said it was after she began to see the gang statutes of 1989 wrongly implemented that she decided to specialize in the defense of gang members.

"My first gang case was a homicide back in 1995. I was so shocked by the stereotype of young men in gangs coming from the gang officer that I made it my mission to challenge this inaccurate and prejudicial evidence," she said.

Istratescu said the statutes make the punishment for gang crimes more severe and can cause a gang member to be convicted and sentenced to life in prison even if he was only present at the time the crime was committed by another gang member.



“I believe very sincerely that the ‘war on gangs’ is a panic response to a misunderstood social phenomenon and that young men from gangs are being warehoused in prison instead of being exposed to education and opportunity at an early age,” she said. “Father Greg Boyle, a priest in Los Angeles who has worked with gang members in Boyle Heights for 20-plus years, said it best, ‘Nothing stops a bullet like a job.’”

“In order to prove a gang crime, the prosecutor puts a police officer who is typically from a police department’s gang unit on the stand,” she said. “The officer gives extremely prejudicial and, in my opinion, unsubstantiated profile evidence about what gang members are like. The jury is easily swayed by this prejudicial testimony, and there is no doubt that it leads to unjust verdicts in many cases.”

Istratescu conducts training courses for the Public Defender’s Office, the California Public Defenders Association (CPDA), and local bar associations, teaching attorneys how to best defend gang members. In order to stay on top in her field, she reads relevant literature and case law in regard to gang defense. She has published an outline titled “Handling Gang Cases: A Conceptual and Methodical Approach,” which she is continually updating, along with numerous motions and briefs, for use in gang cases. She also makes herself available statewide to attorneys who have questions about gang defense.

“As long as this ‘war on gangs’ is the government’s response to poverty and racism, I am happy to help my colleagues improve their lawyering skills in order to better serve our ‘gang member’ clients,” she said.

Istratescu said the most difficult challenge that she faces as a public defender is ridding the public of its misconceptions and stereotypes in regard to defendants and the criminal justice system. In order for her client to have a fair trial, she must succeed in getting the jury to “let go of their misconceptions about the criminal justice system, such as the belief that defendants are always guilty, that defense lawyers will and can do anything to get their clients off, that defendants skate or get off on technicalities, that policemen never lie, that prosecutors don’t have an agenda, that judges are always fair, and that the right thing always happens.”

Working as a public defender, Istratescu has experienced the system’s injustices first-hand. She feels that educating the American people on the system’s shortcomings and opening the doors of U.S. courts would produce a more compassionate public.

“The public must become better educated about its judicial system,” she said. “One solution would be to open the courtrooms to television. Then, the courtrooms would be truly public; and people, hopefully, would be better informed, less fearful, and more humane.”

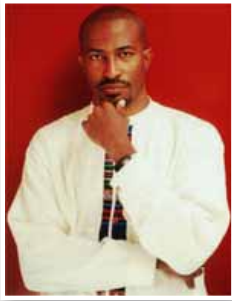
Raised in the small mining town of Lead, SD, Istratescu said she grew up having conversations about politics and the human condition. As the oldest of five children, she helped her mother raise her four siblings after her father was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

“My mother has been my strongest personal influence: her intelligence, her ideas, her work ethic, her strength in the face of adversity—the list goes on and on,” she said. “When I was a junior in college, I was so disillusioned by what was going on in the world that I was ready to quit. I told her I wasn’t happy. She asked me where I got the ridiculous notion that life was all about being happy every day. That was one of those moments of epiphany. I stayed in college and never again thought about quitting anything I ever started, no matter how tough things got.”

Istratescu’s advice to law students is to figure out why they are going to law school. “The law is only a tool; it needs to be attached to something that you care about. Otherwise, you will spend long, tedious hours working on something that is meaningless to you,” she said. “If something is meaningless, then you won’t be motivated to be good at it—to think out of the box and come up with a good solution to the problem at hand. The law is really about dispute resolution. Consequently, it is only as good as the thought and effort that goes into it.”

## Van Jones; Founder and National Executive Director, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights; Oakland, CA

*By Charisse Dengler*



Founder of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights (EBC), Van Jones is intensely passionate about exposing human rights violations and being an instrument of “justice, opportunity, and peace in the streets.”

Having grown up in the rural South, with schoolteacher parents who spoke out boldly on the subject of desegregation, Jones was destined to be a leader in the fight for justice and equality.

“I grew up in a very pro-civil rights household, and that really affected my worldview,” he said.

Jones first began to consider becoming a lawyer while working at a newspaper in Shreveport, LA.

“I felt that there was a lot of racism discrimination in the community that the newspaper was actually adding to and fanning the flames of, as opposed to correcting, and I felt implicated because I was working there,” he said. “I just disagreed with a lot of things—a lot of the slants and angles and the way different neighborhoods and communities were being portrayed—and so I decided that I wanted to make the news and not write it and went to law school.”

While in law school, Jones once again became aware of discrimination in the community around him, and this time, it led to the decision to focus his legal career on battling human rights abuses.

“I noticed that students at Yale University used drugs fairly freely—breaking the law pretty much every weekend—and never got arrested or put in prison for that criminal behavior,” he said, “but, literally four blocks away, kids doing that in the housing projects were labeled drug dealers and drug abusers and sent off to prison. That really shocked me. I thought it was unfair. So, that began to inform what I wanted to do with my law degree.”

Upon graduation, Jones took a job at the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights in San Francisco, and it was there that he met Eva Paterson, the civil rights attorney and mentor who would help him accomplish his dream of founding the EBC.

“Based on the things I saw working as a young civil rights attorney, I decided to create a human rights center that would be really focused on some of these abuses and wouldn’t stop at calling them civil rights abuses or miscarriages of justice, but would say that these are human rights abuses,” he said. “Same way that if we saw any other country that was putting its poor people and its minority population in prison in disproportionate numbers to its majority population, we’d call those human rights abuses. I wanted to say the same thing was happening inside U.S. borders.”

Three years later, Jones turned his dream into reality.

“I started the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in 1996, so it’ll be 10 years old in September,” he said. “Our initial mission was to document, challenge, and expose human rights violations, especially by U.S. law enforcement.”

The EBC’s first program, Bay Area PoliceWatch, was created in 1995 to “police the police.” The program works to expose police misconduct and campaigns on behalf of victims’ families to bring about justice.

“We were and are still one of California’s only state-bar-certified, police-misconduct-lawyer referrals,” Jones said.

Other programs the EBC has implemented include Books Not Bars and Reclaim the Future. Books Not Bars is a program dedicated to getting California’s youth out from behind bars and into positive rehabilitation centers, and Jones is proud of the progress the program has made so far.

“As a result of our efforts and the efforts of others, there’s been about a one-third reduction in the number of kids who are locked up in the state system, and that’s something we’re pretty proud of,” he said. “We’ve got a long way to go, but we’re seeing real progress.”

Reclaim the Future is a program designed to help people with barriers to employment, such as those with criminal records, find quality jobs. The EBC also helped start Freedom Fighter Music, a music label featuring artists whose work expresses the EBC’s beliefs.

“We think that they [Freedom Fighter Music artists] are adding an important perspective—an important voice—especially in the world of hip-hop music, where socially relevant music isn’t as popular or common as it was in the late ‘80s,” Jones said.

When asked why he believes young people have responded so well to the EBC’s programs, Jones said it’s because the organization allows the youth of today to speak out in their own voices and do things their way.

“We don’t try to dress them up or water them down,” he said. “We think that people really need to hear from young people in urban America—raw and uncensored—in all their hope and all their pain so we can start making wiser choices about how to lift those young people up.”

Since he founded the EBC, Jones has been brazenly educating the world on human rights abuses and opening people’s eyes to the injustices taking place in their own communities.

“I get a chance to talk to elected officials. I get a chance to talk to philanthropists, students, [and] community leaders that are maybe not focused on this part of the problem,” he said. “It always feels good when you’re able to see the light bulbs go off in people’s heads and you realize that you are helping to shape people’s understanding of the world and what in fact is going on.”

For law students interested in effecting some major change in their society, Jones advises finding a mentor who has been in their field of interest for a while and who can make recommendations and give advice. He also vigorously encourages students to go with their instincts and fight for what they believe in.

“If you feel called to start something, chances are if it’s worth doing at all, most people will tell you don’t do it,” he said. “So, listen to your own heart. Get a patron or somebody—get a couple—and then, don’t be afraid to fail.”

“The worst thing in the world is not being passionate about something and trying to start a project and it failing,” he said. “That’s not the worst thing at all. The worst thing is to be passionate about something and take no action and always wonder whether you could’ve thrown a rock that would’ve caused an avalanche in the direction that you think things should go. That’s the worst thing.”

Over the past decade, Jones has worked relentlessly to create an organization dedicated to justice, opportunity, and peace; and now that the EBC is established and flourishing, he has no intention of slowing down.

“I think the Ella Baker Center is on the path to becoming a world-class strategy and action center for justice and opportunity...and we’re going to continue on that road,” he said. “And as for me, I’m going to keep trying to find ways to make this country more just and to make the struggling in marginal communities more healthy and prosperous.”

## Karen Harned: Executive Director, NFIB Legal Foundation, Washington, DC

*By Regan Morris*



Small businesses comprise the economic engine of the United States. As executive director of the National Federation of Independent Business' Legal Foundation, attorney Karen Harned helps the country's entrepreneurs understand the law, cut through legal red tape, and stay out of court.

The NFIB Legal Foundation calls itself “the voice of small business in the nation's courts.” The foundation is a nonprofit organization affiliated with the NFIB, a trade association.

Harned, who is based in Washington, DC, spoke with LawCrossing in Burbank, CA, during a brief lecture tour of the West Coast, where she met small-business owners and helped them learn “how to stay out of court.”

There are so many regulatory hurdles for small businesses now, and the situation is only getting worse, Harned said. Harned's job is to educate and litigate on behalf of small business. The foundation is not a legal-defense fund, and litigating is done by outside counsel.

“We represent small-business owners collectively—the small business market—so we'll go in on a brief and say, “This issue impacts all small-business owners,” she said. “We always try to let the judge know what the collective small-business perspective is on an issue.”

Harned says a big part of her job is trying to get the message out that mandates and too many regulations destroy small businesses. Lawmakers and regulators, she says, quite often miss the big picture. What's one more form that should only take an hour or two to fill in? But the forms keep adding up; and businesses are drowning in a sea of state, local, and federal red tape, she says.

The daughter of a corporate attorney, Harned grew up in Oklahoma and said she knew she wanted to be an attorney since she was in high school. Politics was also a strong draw; and during college, Harned interned for State Senator Don Nickles, eventually becoming his assistant press secretary.

Nickles, who went on to occupy a seat in the U.S. Senate from 1981-2005, was a small businessman fed up with the red tape in Washington, DC. Harned was heavily influenced by his passion for helping small business and made it her own personal cause.

After graduating from The George Washington University Law School in 1995, Harned worked as an associate at Olsson, Frank, and Weeda, P.C., where she specialized in food and drug law. During her time at the firm, she represented several small businesses and their trade associations before Congress and federal agencies.

“I was always aware of small business before, but it was when I got to D.C. and heard Senator Nickles talk and just saw what was going on with the regulations and talking to constituents [that I realized] it’s such a broad problem,” Harned said. “It really impacted me and made me want to be part of the solution, not the problem.”

Harned says she got “Potomac fever” when she arrived in Washington, DC, and urged attorneys interested in small-business law and policy to move where the laws are made. But, she added, there are opportunities for attorneys everywhere to help small businesses understand and comply with the laws. By getting to know small-business owners through communities or trade associations like the NFIB, there’s no shortage of potential clients.

The NFIB has 600,000 members nationwide. During Harned’s lecture in California, many small-business owners complained that they were faced with insurmountable insurance bills and the threat of frivolous lawsuits. The NFIB says national surveys show health insurance, business insurance, and workers’ compensation insurance are the top-three problems small-business owners complain about. Across the nation, entrepreneurs say they either can’t afford or access various kinds of insurance.

Frivolous lawsuits are another problem for entrepreneurs, and Harned advised businesses to find an attorney they like and trust now, before they need one, and document everything so that a business has a paper trail and evidence if a disgruntled employee or unhappy customer files a frivolous lawsuit.

Harned says some attorneys target small businesses because they know the entrepreneurs are likely to settle for fear of racking up large legal bills and losing time from their business.

Although the Legal Foundation does not dispense legal advice to individual businesses, it is growing and may do so in the future, Harned said. For now, it compiles legal tips in educational booklets for NFIB members who might need advice.

The Legal Foundation has had many recent victories, but Harned says the red tape for businesses is only getting worse. The Legal Foundation says there are more than 75,000 pages of federal regulations that cost Americans in excess of \$840 billion. The Legal Foundation tries to keep track of all the rules and alert its members about laws important to small businesses.

“I feel like I kind of have the best of all the worlds, because I really feel like I get to do charitable work, we are a charity, and I get paid for it. And it’s a constituency I believe in and I really feel is vital to the nation,” Harned said. “Because that is who is employing most of the people across the country—small business. And they’re coming up with the new ideas and the new services; and, again, anything I can do to ease their burden is just very rewarding personally.”



## Gloria Allred, High-Profile Attorney and Author of *Fight Back and Win*

By Charisse Dengler



A dangerous combination of feminist dynamo and fearless ambition, Gloria Allred is much more than an attorney. Having been a victim herself, Allred is a prizefighter for equality; a firm believer in justice; and one heck of a fun-loving, fast-talking success story

Born in Philadelphia, PA, Allred grew up as the only child of a salesman and a stay-at-home mom. She spent her childhood doing typical kid things like selling lemonade and reading books; and when it came time for high school, she was accepted into the Philadelphia High School for Girls (Girls' High). It was there that she became a class officer and cheerleader for the school's all-girl basketball team.

In her first book, *Fight Back and Win*, she says she still thinks of herself as a cheerleader for girls, as well as women.

When asked what drove her forward in life and motivated her to become the fiercely passionate female she is today, Allred credits her family and her high school experience.

"I had confidence, partly from my parents and partly from the Girls' High School," she said. "We were taught to have higher expectations of ourselves and have confidence."

During her childhood, Allred also looked to her second cousin, Rachel Ash, for inspiration on the type of woman she wanted to become. "Aunt Rachel," as Allred called her, was a cardiologist at the Children's Heart Hospital in Philadelphia.

"She was a role model for what a woman could be—a woman who wanted a career outside the home. As a matter of fact, she was the only woman I knew who had a career outside of the home," she said.

After high school, Allred went to the University of Pennsylvania, where she met her first husband; got married; and become pregnant with her daughter, Lisa, at age 19. However, soon after Lisa's birth, Allred and her husband divorced.

A newly single mother, Allred then moved back in with her parents and continued to study hard in school, graduating with honors in English. Fresh out of college, she tried her hand at a variety of jobs before she decided to become a teacher. After taking a position at Benjamin Franklin High School, she began working on her master's degree at New York University.

Allred's earliest legal battle occurred after her divorce, when she contacted an attorney to help get her ex-husband to pay his child support; but she didn't begin to consider becoming a lawyer until later, when she dated a law student and became interested in the field.

However, it was during a vacation to Acapulco in 1966 that Allred had an experience that changed her life forever and shaped her decisions for years to come. She was raped and, upon returning home, found out she was pregnant. She then underwent an illegal abortion and almost died from the medical side effects.

Needless to say, it was this experience that ultimately led Allred to become the champion for women's rights that she is today.

Allred first enrolled in law school at Southwestern University in Los Angeles and later transferred to and graduated from Loyola University School of Law, also in Los Angeles. She encourages more women to consider joining the legal field.

"I definitely think we need more women judges and we need more women partners in law firms," she said. "We need more women and men going into the areas of sexual discrimination, employment discrimination, AIDS discrimination, and all the areas our firm represents."

It was during her time in law school that Allred met Michael Maroko and Nathan Goldberg, who are now her partners at Allred, Maroko & Goldberg. The firm started out focusing mainly on criminal defense cases, but soon turned to civil rights cases; and Allred has been an outspoken voice for women and minorities ever since.

Over the past 30 years, she has passionately defended Hunter Tylo, an actress fired from the television show *Melrose Place* for being pregnant; steadfastly protected the family of Nicole Brown Simpson as they defended her memory and spoke out against domestic violence; and boldly voiced her opinions against Tommy Lee, Mike Tyson, and Michael Jackson.

In lower-profile cases, she has taken on dry cleaners, hair salons, drugstore chains, and restaurants. She has even challenged the Boy Scouts of America, as well as the anything-goes world of reality television.

However, out of all the cases she has been involved in, many people recognize her most from her role as the protective guardian of Amber Frey. Between shielding her from media attacks and upholding her right to privacy while testifying in the Scott Peterson trial, Allred formed a relationship with Frey that she describes in her book as being like that of a mother and daughter.

During the infamous double-murder trial, she served as Frey's defender, adviser, and friend; and she is full of praise for the young woman's strength and courage.

In *Fight Back and Win*, Allred discusses the details of this case and a myriad of other inspiring cases in an effort to empower victims of discrimination.

"It was a challenge to fit the book in, but I wanted to do it," she said. "If it would empower women and minorities, I was glad to do it. I want them to realize that they have more power to win against injustice than they've ever realized."

In addition to her work as a partner at Allred, Maroko & Goldberg, Allred also founded and sits as President of the Women's Equal Rights Legal Defense and Education Fund, a nonprofit organization created to ensure that women are aware of the different legal opportunities available to them.

Over the course of her career as a crusader for civil rights, Allred has been known to pull some pretty outrageous stunts to get her points across (such as protesting an all-male club by joining the men in the steam room), but does she advise future lawyers to make a habit of this brazen behavior?

"I would never tell someone what to do or not to do. I can only say what has worked for us. At my firm, we believe in creative lawyering, so I'll do whatever it takes. And my clients know that, and my clients like that," she said. "My advice [to law students] would be to live their values."

Allred, who speaks in perfectly formed sound bites, has often been criticized for abusing the media. However, others praise her prowess for handling publicity. She said she believes media exposure should be reevaluated on a case-by-case basis.

"It depends on what is in the best interest of the client," she said. "It can be helpful in some cases and harmful in others. You have to make a judgment call."

In the past, Allred has frequently been asked about her political aspirations, and she has repeatedly answered that she has none. She said it's almost a certainty that she will never run for office because she feels she can do more for the people and issues she cares about by being a lawyer.

“As a lawyer, I can speak my mind without worrying about votes or contributions to a campaign,” she said.

In the future, Allred said she plans to continue doing what she’s doing now: winning battles for her clients and being close to her family.

“The opposition is often a bit intimidated by what I’ll do next,” she said. “A woman who has no fear is worrisome to those who oppose what I stand for.”

But Allred certainly isn’t worried about the opposition or anyone else. She is focused solely on her clients and their specific needs.

“I most enjoy helping my clients win a result with which they are happy and which is fair and just, given the law and the circumstances,” she said. “If they’re happy, I’m happy.”

