

Gwinnett County Bar Association

Uplifting and Inspiring the Community
Member Since 1948 our strength

August 2020 Newsletter

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President's Corner

By Dodie Sachs

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through strenuous struggle." This past month, and this past season, have been times of great change through continuous struggle. As I reflect on events of this past month, I was struck by thoughts of sadness as we recognize the passing of Judge Ramon Alvarado, but also great happiness. I am so happy that our former board member, Nhan-Ai Simms, is now the newest judge of Gwinnett Juvenile Court. I know that Judge Robert Rodatus is happy to be retired, but I know as happy and proud as we are of Nhan-Ai Simms, we are all so excited to see Judge Rodatus retire. August is usually a time when parents are happy to send their children off to school, but I recognize that this August is not so much with that happiness. Either we are not sending our children off to school this year which is a struggle all of its own, or we are sending our children off to school and worrying about them while they are there. As we progress through this Bar Year, I know that everyone's struggle with COVID-19 will impact every aspect of our daily lives. Please be patient and understanding with our friends, colleagues, family, and clients as we all go through this year. Please listen compassionately to people, when you "cancel" them, new and you're not met with response full of everything your friend is worrying about. We all need to process through our stresses and worries, now more than ever.



Dodie Sachs
Gwinnett County Bar Association
President 2020-2021

In GCBA news, please everyone take a moment to give a warm welcome to Yari Lawson, for being elected our new Treasurer. Next, on August 21, 2020 at 5:00 p.m., we are having Zoom Installations of the Board and an Awards and Recognition Ceremony. Please register through contact, either through the link below, or in one of the emails we will send out. We will email everyone that registers a Zoom link to watch the ceremony. We will also be giving the awards that we normally award at Law Day, since Law Day 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19, August 21 would have been our first luncheon, but we are using the date for installations and awards instead. I hope to "see" you all there! Our next luncheon will be on September 18. It will most likely be a virtual meeting over Zoom, but we are checking the CDC's guidelines for safe gathering regularly, and will announce the luncheon and speaker as soon as possible. Thank you for answering our Survey on COVID preparations and bar activities this past summer.

Meet the 2020 Officers

GCBA President - Dodie Sachs

I'm not seeking membership funds. I am hoping to make the articles short and concise so people tend not to read much more than a couple of paragraphs.

[Text Link](#)

The facts about my career and life are easy to determine. Yes, I am thankful for the role of our Judges. Yes, I love all Minerva's & Tracy, LLC, and I am a family law attorney. Yes, I am married, my husband really wants you to take away from reading my profile in this newsletter. I love travel. I have enjoyed visiting in the south of the GCBA, and now I hope to visit the organization in the fall. I have met people through participating in GCBA events that I would not have met otherwise. Not only have I met these people, but I have formed friendships and relationships that have impacted my professional life. I have had opportunities to talk to our judges and attorneys, and I have had the chance to see the inner workings of our county that I would not have had without the GCBA. I am honored to be elected President this year, and I will be honored again next year to join the ranks of our GCBA Past Presidents who are a truly great group of people. I have two requests: (1) please be more active and (2) please bring people with you when you attend our next luncheon.

So I ask you this not because I want our "numbers" to be high, and I am not seeking membership funds. I am hoping to make the articles short and concise so people tend not to read much more than a couple of paragraphs. I'm not seeking membership funds. I am hoping to make the articles short and concise so people tend not to read much more than a couple of paragraphs. I'm not seeking membership funds. I am hoping to make the articles short and concise so people tend not to read much more than a couple of paragraphs.

President - Elect - Danielle Mays

Danielle was born and raised in Buford, Georgia. After receiving her undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia and her law degree and Advanced Legal Writing certification from Mercer University School of Law in 2013. While studying in Athens, she interned at the criminal defense and family law in Northwest Georgia, where she also served as the director of the Gwinnett County Juvenile Court Treatment Program and the President of the Tallapoosa Bar Association. She is currently practicing law in Marietta, Georgia. In May, 2019, she returned to Gwinnett County and both joined her father, Walt M. Britt, at Charles Britt & Son LLC in Marietta, Georgia. Danielle practices family law and criminal defense and serves as defense attorney for Gwinnett County's Drug Treatment Program. Danielle and her husband welcomed their son John Walt Mays into the world in 2018, and Danielle is loving her new role as "mom" in her spare time. Danielle enjoys yoga, cycling, hiking, kayaking, reading, traveling, being a booker, and spending time with her dogs, Dana and Buster.

Vice President - Amina Bakari

Amina Bakari grew up in Richmond, VA. She received her B.A. in Political Science from Hampton University in Hampton, VA in 2010. She moved to Georgia and received her J.D. from the University of Georgia in 2013. While studying in Athens, she interned at the Adams-Clarke County District Attorney's office during her 3L year. Upon graduation she completed an internship with the Gwinnett County District Attorney's office. Amina was admitted to the Georgia Bar in October 2013 and began working at the Gwinnett County Solicitor's Office in 2013. She became an Assistant District Attorney with the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office, and enjoys getting to know and work with members of the Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office. She is looking forward to serving the Gwinnett Bar as Treasurer this year.

Treasurer - Yari Lawson

Place article copy here. Be sure to make the articles short and concise so people tend not to read much more than a couple of paragraphs.

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Secretary - Sean Goldstein

Sean Goldstein, Esq. is a native of Philadelphia, PA. He attended the University of Florida and graduated with a B.S. in Journalism in 2003. He then moved to Atlanta in 2004 and attended Georgia State University College of Law. He graduated with a J.D. from Georgia State in 2007. Attorney Goldstein pursued his career as a criminal defense attorney by defending indigent criminal defendants under the Public Defender's Office before even graduating from law school. He then worked as an assistant public defender at Douglas County from 2008-2012. Attorney Goldstein then practiced law at Douglas County Public Defender's Office to enter private practice in the established Goldstein Law Group in Lawrenceville in 2012. He now practices primarily in the fields of criminal defense and personal injury. Attorney Goldstein is a devoted father and wife and also serves as Myung-Sun Cathy Goldstein, his son Abraham, and daughter Leah. He enjoys football and friends on the weekends.

Immediate Past President - Donald Lee

Donald was born in Silver Spring, MD, went to Cornell University for undergrad in biology, and then attended Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego for law school. Donald was a public defender in Colton County Superior Court for three years and then in Winston County Juvenile Court for another three. He has been a GAL here in Gwinnett County for almost 10 years. He has been a GAL here in Gwinnett County handling DPCCS, child custody and guardianship cases, and in doing so, he became a Certified Child Welfare Law Specialist. He and his spouse, Allison, have three beautiful children, two boys and one girl named Lucky, Donald is a Leadership Graduate 2010 graduating from the Georgia Bar Association (Gwinnett County Bar Association), a member of the Board of Trustees for Gwinnett County and President of the Community Board Member for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) and a Planning Advisory Committee member for the Gwinnett 2040 Unified Plan. He loves Gwinnett and wants nothing but to see our community thrive.

Committee Chairs

Law Day Chair
Jaelita Smith

Government Liaison
Committee Chair
Dana Pagan

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Milestone: Ramon Alvarado, Judge, Gwinnett County Recorders Court

Judge Ramon Alvarado

This was Ramon Alvarado's obituary as printed [here](#):

Ramon Alvarado, 41, died on July 20, 2020, at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. After being diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia on his 40th birthday in 2019, Ramon achieved eight months of remission in February 2020 with his remarkable determination he completed a half-marathon he adamantly trained for to help his body recover from five rounds of intensive chemotherapy. The day after the race, a routine bone marrow biopsy confirmed Ramon's cancer had returned. He took great pleasure in reminding his friends that "a dude with cancer got a better time than him."

Following Ramon's cancer relapse, he underwent additional treatment in preparation for a stem cell transplant. Ramon's sister, Yvonne, bravely and without hesitation, acted as his stem cell donor in hopes of curing his leukemia once and for all. On April 19, 2020, Ramon received through transfusion of YuSun's stem cells. The transplant itself was successful in that Ramon was cancer-free at the time of his death. However, complications from the aggressive chemotherapy and radiation triggered a series of events that led to three medically challenging months. Ramon achieved the significant 100-day post-transplant milestone on Sunday, July 19, and died the following day.

Ramon grew up in a military family, living in many locations before settling in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He graduated from high school in 1997 and he earned an undergraduate degree from Grand Valley State University in 2002. Ramon went on to attend law school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a proud graduate who relocated to Georgia in 2005 to work in the Coweta County Public Defender's Office. Ramon was passionate about indigent defense, determined to provide equal justice for all people. He served as faculty at numerous trial skills training programs all over the nation, and he engaged inspiring rising public defenders. When he opened his own criminal defense practice in 2008, indigent clients made up more than half of his caseload. After more than ten years in private practice, Ramon achieved his long-term dream of becoming a Judge.

In January 2019, Ramon was sworn in as Gwinnett County's first Hispanic judge; he was also the county's first full-time judge of Korean descent. Though his time on the bench was much shorter than expected, he loved the opportunity to interact with the county's constituents, making sure every voice was heard. Ramon also coordinated with the county animal shelter and stressed a variety of adoptable pets to feature in his courtroom.

Ramon enjoyed spending time with his wife, Drew, and their three dogs, whether relaxing on the couch watching Atlanta sports or sitting outside in the beautiful mountains of Blue Ridge. Ramon's hobbies included making ridiculous bets, obsessively suffering from, and planning next next meal while in the throes of his current meal. He never met a dessert he didn't like.

Ramon is survived by his wife, Drew Dotson, his parents, Alberto and YuSun Alvarado, his sister YuSun (Sherry) Murren and nieces Avery and Amara. His extended family includes Steve and Carol Dotson, Kevin Dotson, Claire (William) Timmins and nephews, John and Thomas. Ramon also leaves behind three dogs, Noodle, Benny, and Maggie, whom he treated like royalty. We imagine he's happily reunited with his two beloved dogs, Abby and Phoenix.

Ramon was a perpetual giver, especially for people and animals in need. In lieu of flowers, Ramon would want his legacy to live on through donations to further his many passions. Ideas include non-profit organizations focused on civil rights, equality, equal justice, and animal rights. He also passionately supported the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation in honor of his wife's childhood cystic fibrosis diagnosis. There's Always, an organization that helped him tremendously following his leukemia diagnosis.

Though no service is planned at this time, Ramon's hope was to celebrate his life through an event that left everyone in awe of the food selection. When it's safe to do so, we'll have a feast in his honor, in the meantime, know that Ramon lived a happy life. During his initial cancer treatment, sitting in his favorite chair at home, Ramon told his wife with confidence, "If for any reason I die, I want you to know that I was happy. I accomplished everything I could have dreamed of and more." So, despite inevitable moments of sadness, rest assured Ramon's heart and soul were just as full as his stomach.

An AJC story about Judge Alvarado can be found [here](#).

GCBA Law Day Awards and Officer Installation

On August 21, 2020, at the Gwinnett County Justice and Administration Center, the GCBA will hold a ceremony for the new officers to be installed and for the Law Day Awards of 2020.

Although the majority of Law Day 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19, Gwinnett County residents made notable contributions to our community during the Bar Year. This ceremony will be available for viewing through both Zoom and Webex. A link will be sent out in advance.

GCBA Officer Installations

Conducted by Judge Hutchinson. The new officers to be installed:

President- Dorothy "Dodie" Sachs
Vice President- Danielle Britt Mays
President-Elect- Amina Bakari
Treasurer- Yari Lawson
Secretary- Sean Goldstein
Law Day Chair- Jaelita Smith

Law Day 2020 Awards

Past President's Award- Donald Lee, presented by Dodie Sachs
Law Enforcement Officer of the Year- Sheriff Butch Conway, Chief Butch Ayers
Liberty Bell Award- Diane Dierks
Pro Bono Volunteer of the Year Award given to Tracy Drake, presented by Rachel Lazarus
Award of Merit- Judge John Doran, Jr., Judge Robert Rodatus, Judge Ramon Alvarado, Judge Emily Powell
Presidential Award- Bonnie Youn, presented by Donald Lee.

GCBA Outgoing Section Head Recognition- Richard Armond (Criminal Defense), Dina Khemattalina and June Lynn (Family Law section), Melody Glouster (Estate Planning and Probate), Jodi Miles (Solo and Small Firm Section) Kelly Kautz (Juvenile Section)

GCBA Committee Chair Recognition- Sean Goldstein and Farooq Mughal, Legislative Day Recognition- Judicial Applicant Review Board

Congratulations to all of the recipients!

SPECIAL ELECTION RESULTS

With Nhan-Ai Simms' appointment as the newest juvenile court judge of Gwinnett County, a special election was held to fill her now vacant role as treasurer. The results of the special election for treasurer of the GCBA are in: Attorney Yari Lawson was officially elected as the new GCBA treasurer. Congratulations to Yari! To see the results of the special election, click [here](#).

Nhan-Ai Simms Sworn In As New Juvenile Court Judge

Judge Nhan-Ai Simms was sworn in as the newest juvenile court judge in Gwinnett County. Congratulations, Judge Simms!

Former GCBA President Donald Lee and Newly Appointed Judge Simms

Covenant Counseling Annual Golf Tournament

Covenant Counseling will hold its annual Covenant and Golf Classic on September 21, 2020. The event will feature a golf tournament, silent auction, and raffle. All proceeds will go to Covenant Counseling addiction and treatment center to benefit those in need of counseling.

For flyer and registration form, click [here](#).

SECTION UPDATES

Join the Gwinnett Family Law Section for our virtual meeting August 26, 2020 at noon via Zoom. This meeting will be a two part educational meeting. Part One is Real Estate Issues in Family Law with David Lauer - How to write settlements and orders the right way. Never make a real estate drafting mistake again after watching this session.

Part Two - Regina Edwards will teach a session on virtual hearings. Zoom hearings and Webex are going to be here for a long time, maybe even forever. This fabulous seminar will have information for novices and techies alike. Let's make the Gwinnett Bar Family Law Section stand out by using these tips and tricks in your next trial.

Believe me, the judges and your clients will thank you for attending this program.

Rsvp to familylawsectiongcbaba@gmail.com to receive the link.

JOBS

Doraville Municipal Court Judge Vacancy

The City of Doraville is soliciting applicants for the recently vacated Doraville judgeship. Please see the job listing for how to make application.

Read the entire job listing [here](#).

LEGAL UPDATES AND ARTICLES

Implicit Bias in the Justice System: From Recognition to Action

By Regina Matthews, Esq.

In the wake of the recent tragedies that have rocked our nation to its core, I have had many moments of reflection (in between the bouts of sadness, of anger, of fear, or powerlessness). Like many of you, I am left with a desire for a deeper understanding. But above all, I am also left with a desire, both personally, and as a jurist, to make sure we are never in this place again. In the memory of Alimuddin Arbery, of Breonna Taylor, of George Floyd, and all those before them, I am making the commitment to never turn my back on this responsibility.

So here we are, racism whose hearts we can never change, as learned members of the legal profession, we CAN work together to dismantle the systems and practices that disproportionately affect people of color. This work starts with bias recognition. I have come to realize that confronting the toxic implicit bias based on race is uncomfortable for most. I can't imagine that it is easy for anyone to come to terms with the realization that they hold biases towards a group of people simply based on the color of their skin. After all, we work in diverse circles, and some of us have the ability to be both acutely aware of our own personal biases, and the commitment to employ a system of checks and balances to ensure our physical responses don't lead support to perpetuating those biases. For me, that means to listen and observe. I need to spend a person or situation. It means to pause and reflect before taking any action, good or bad. It means to think ahead of time about how I will respond positively to others in the future, taking into account my biases gracefully.

It is my belief that once we recognize our biases and take steps to control how we respond to others based on them, we can begin to redefine how the justice system is perceived. And, once the disproportionate outcomes and mistreatment of those involved in the justice system based on these biases is minimized, the perceptions of prejudice and racial or ethnic bias are also minimized. It is only then that we can move to the real work of dismantling the systems that thrive on oppression, racism, and other practices that not only harm our profession, but that destroy the very soul of our nation.

[1] Rachael D. Godsil, Why Race Matters in Physics Class, 64 UCLA L. Rev. 40, 51-52 (2016).
[2] Jerry Kang, eds. Implicit Bias: Bias Across the Law, 1: 5-7 (Justin Levinson, & Robert Smith eds. 2012). Godsil, supra note 24, at 52-53; Greenwald & Krieger, supra note 5.

LAWYER JOKES



Articles and Updates Welcome!!

If you would like to contribute to the GCBA Monthly Newsletter, e-mail Submissions@gcbaba.com by the 15th of each month to Editor Sean@GCBABA.com.

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