



## LADORIS HAZZARD CORDELL

On April 13, 1982, Governor Brown appointed an indomitable voice to the bench—Judge LaDoris Hazzard Cordell. In the 80's when styles, people, and politics are constantly changing, Ms. Cordell is a reminder of uniqueness.

She brings to the bench a wealth of knowledge and experience. Her dynamic character is reflected in her academic and professional background. After graduating from Antioch College in Ohio with a theater arts/speech major, Cordell enrolled at Stanford Law School. She was the only black woman in her graduating class of 1974. Upon graduation, Ms. Cordell, who is bilingual in Spanish, established herself as the first lawyer to practice in East Palo Alto, California, a predominantly black and chicano community.

In 1978 she was appointed Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at Stanford Law School. During her four years at Stanford, Ms. Cordell successfully implemented a minority admissions program which distinguished Stanford Law School as the leader in the nation in its enrollment of minority students.

Ms. Cordell, a multidimensional individual, has various memberships and affiliations with organizations such as the Black Women's Lawyer Association of Northern California, the NAACP and several state bar committees. She was on the Board of Directors of Women and the Law, and President of the Manhattan Playhouse, a community theater in East Palo Alto. Featured in *Ebony* magazine's "Speaking of People," she has twice been nominated for the *Black Enterprise* Magazine Annual Achievement Award in the "Under 30" Category, and is listed in *Who's Who in California*.

Cordell, the great granddaughter of a slave feels she "owes a debt going back a long, long way." When asked about the role of a judge, Ms. Cordell responds: "Being a judge is a difficult job and one of the most difficult aspects is the sentencing." She elicits that there should be a healthy balance between protecting the public and aiding the defendant. Judge Cordell has a novel approach to sentencing. In one case, two youths were convicted of vandalism involving racial slurs. The youths were directed to write a letter to the victim, and were given a 30 day term in county jail which was suspended on the condition that they pass a college course on Third World Culture. Her decision was based on the belief that educating the pair would help society more than jailing them.

At 33, Ms. Cordell is the first black woman judge in the Municipal Court in Santa Clara County. She feels the added pressure of being one of the few black woman judges, but added: "We are used to feeling the pressure."

A former law professor at Stanford described Ms. Cordell as "balanced, reasonable and fair with a real sensitivity and understanding about issues that come before her." Equally telling of her abilities are predictions by her colleagues that a seat on the California Supreme Court eventually awaits

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her. Ms. Cordell's contribution to the legal world, thus far, has laid the groundwork for others to follow.

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