



## **LaDoris Cordell**

### **Topics**

Activism and Social Justice, Criminal Justice

### **Travels From**

### **Bio**

LaDoris Hazzard Cordell is a 1974 graduate of Stanford Law School, practiced in East Palo Alto, CA and was an Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at Stanford Law School. Judge Cordell was the first African American woman judge in northern California. After 20 years, she retired from the bench to become Vice Provost & Special Counselor to the President for Campus Relations at Stanford University. From 2010-2015, Judge Cordell was the Independent Police Auditor for the City of San Jose. Judge Cordell was an on-camera legal analyst for CBS-5 television in the Bay Area, and a guest commentator on Court TV, MSNBC's "The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell," "The Weekend with Joshua Johnson," and "The Mehdi Hasan Show" on NBC's Peacock Network. Judge Cordell has also interviewed public figures before live audiences at the Commonwealth Club and at Stanford University that have included rapper Talib Kweli, Kim Kardashian, David Brooks, Ralph Nader, Billie Jean King, Anita Hill, Amy Goodman, Valerie Jarrett, Lesly Stahl Caitlyn Jenner, Robert Reich, Donna Brazile, Susannah Cahalan, Jamal Greene, Annette Gordon-Reed, Al Franken, Gov. Terry McAuliffe, Julie Lythcott-Haims, Glenn Close, Ian Haney Lopez, Randall Kennedy, David Gergen, Jesse Jackson

and Ira Glass.

## SPEECHES

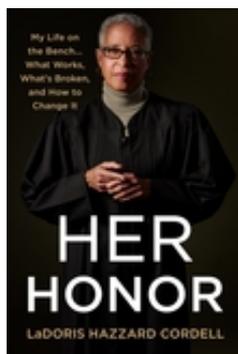
**Things judicial** Judge Cordell can speak about anything involving the work of state court trial judges including judicial selection, judicial discipline, judicial elections, juries, plea bargains, sentencing, the variety of cases over which trial judges preside and the challenges they face when hearing cases that include criminal, juvenile, drunk driving, adoptions, name changes, mental health, probate. Audiences find everyday real life dramas that play out in courtrooms across America to be fascinating. Judge Cordell is, at heart, a storyteller who enjoys bringing audiences into my courtroom by talking about the variety of cases over which she presided, many of which are described in Her Honor.

**Judicial Activism** Judge Cordell was a judicial activist in the sense that she sought ways to improve the legal system by thinking outside of the box. For example, Judge Cordell was the first judge in California (possibly in the nation) to require convicted drunk drivers to install breath devices in their cars to prevent them from starting their cars if they have been drinking. (2) in the family court, she created the nation's first Supervised Visitation Program to enable non-custodial parents to visit with their children under the supervision of senior citizens at neighborhood community centers; and (3) Judge Cordell occasionally utilized a creative approach to sentencing, such as when she sentenced two young white men to attend a seminar on third world cultures after they were convicted of burning a cross on the lawn of a black family.

**Social justice reforms in the legal system** Judge Cordell proposals to improve the legal system include (1) changing law school curricula to include training on judging; (2) abolishing the election of judges and instead, utilizing merit selection commissions; (3) limiting the recall of judges to situations wherein the judge has committed malfeasance, failed to perform her duties, or been convicted of a serious crime and never based on a judges' lawful, albeit controversial decisions; (4) increasing pay for jury duty; (5) requiring jury trials for juveniles charged with felonies; (6) abolishing the felony-murder rule; (7) abolishing life without parole sentences for juvenile offenders; (8) enact legislation to stop racial bias in the use of peremptory challenges; (9) put an end to coercive plea bargains; and (10) bring transparency to judicial disciplinary proceedings. The next to last chapter in Her Honor is titled "The Fix" wherein Judge Cordell wrote about these proposed reforms.

**Policing** Judge Cordell was the Independent Police Auditor for the City of San Jose, CA for five years (2010-2015). She can talk about policing in America, Supreme Court rulings that have given police their Superpowers (e.g. allowing pretext traffic stops; allowing cops to lie to arrestees), and about proposed reforms ranging from body-worn cameras to civilian oversight to reimagining policing. Judge Cordell chaired two Blue Ribbon Commissions, one in San Jose that evaluated the jails in Santa Clara County following the murder of a mentally ill inmate by three jail officers, and one in San Francisco that evaluated the SF Police Department in the aftermath of a racist/sexist texting scandal.

## BOOKS



## HARDCOVER

[HER HONOR](#) My Life on the Bench...What Works, What's Broken, and How to Change It

Celadon Books

In *Her Honor*, Judge LaDoris Hazzard Cordell provides a rare and thought-provoking insider account of our legal system, sharing vivid stories of the cases that came through her courtroom and revealing the strengths, flaws, and much-needed changes within our courts.