

Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission

September 21, 2020



Gender and Justice Commission Statement on the Passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud, Co-Chair
Washington State Supreme Court

Judge Marilyn G. Paja, Co-Chair
Kitsap County District Court

Honorable Melissa Beaton
Skagit County Clerk

Judge Anita Crawford-Willis
Seattle Municipal Court

Judge Rebecca Glasgow
Court of Appeals, Division II

Justice Steve González
Washington State Supreme Court

Ms. Lillian Hawkins
King County District Court, West Division

Professor Gail Hammer
Gonzaga University School of Law

Ms. Elizabeth Hendren
Northwest Justice Project

Judge Eric Z. Lucas
Snohomish County Superior Court

Ms. Erin Moody
Eleemosynary Legal Services

Ms. Riddhi Mukhopadhyay
Sexual Violence Law Center

Dr. Dana Raigrodski
University of Washington School of Law

Ms. Jennifer Ritchie
Washington Women Lawyers

Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown
Benton Franklin Superior Courts

Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith
Suquamish Tribal Court

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Ms. Victoria L. Vreeland
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The Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission celebrates the extraordinary life and legacy of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and mourns her passing. A champion of gender equality, her work paved the way for a Commission like ours to exist.

The role of the Gender and Justice Commission is to identify concerns and make recommendations regarding the equal treatment of all parties, attorneys, and court employees and to promote gender equality in Washington State Courts.

Justice Ginsburg certainly advanced our understanding and interpretation of the law, especially as it concerned gender equality and other civil rights – from voting rights to the constitutional guarantee of separation of powers. She especially championed the independence of the judicial branch and our role in enforcing constitutional limits on the executive and legislative branches.

But she also advanced our understanding of the structure of our legal system by becoming part of the judiciary in the first place. She was only the second woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court and the first Jewish woman. She gave generations of women, especially women attorneys, a new model for how we might shape our own careers in the law.

Perhaps surprisingly to some, Justice Ginsberg also famously cherished her relationship with the colleague with whom she most strongly disagreed. But her legal philosophy and her life work were based on mutual respect and continued, respectful interaction, so the fact that she applied those values to her personal relationships should come as no surprise at all.

We celebrate Justice Ginsburg's contributions to the advancement of the law, especially in the field of gender equality, civil rights, and constitutional rights. We celebrate the fact that she changed the structure and look of the judiciary. And we celebrate her application of the values of respect, continuous respectful discussion, and incredibly hard work, to her personal life.

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The Washington State Supreme Court, now containing seven women, is the most diverse Supreme Court in United States history. The Gender and Justice Commission is proud to work with Justices chairing our fellow Supreme Court Commissions on the most pressing issues of our time, such as barriers to access to justice for women of color.

Our Commission was created because of a recommendation made in 1989 to establish a body to monitor, encourage, and evaluate efforts to eliminate gender bias in our courts. (*Gender and Justice in the Courts*, Washington State). Like Justice Ginsburg, we know that “Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.” There is more work to be done to make our courts free of bias for everyone, including those who are historically left out, and we intend to do it.

We hope you will join us.



Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud
Co-Chair, Gender and Justice Commission



Judge Marilyn G. Paja
Co-Chair, Gender and Justice Commission