



# United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Ninth Circuit Judge Dorothy Nelson Receives Lifetime Achievement Award**

**SAN FRANCISCO** – Senior Circuit Judge Dorothy W. Nelson, of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Western Justice Center (WJC) Sept. 22, 2022, for her vision and dedication in founding the center and decades of visionary work in conflict resolution.

The center, founded in 1987, works to strengthen communities through the development of conflict resolution skills and capacity of youth, educators, schools and community partners. In 2020, the organization set a four-year goal to train 1,000 students, educators and volunteers with the conflict resolution skills they need to transform 30 schools and impact 15,000 youth across the Greater Los Angeles Area, and the center has already exceeded those goals.

“Eighty-five percent of cases could be mediated,” said Judge Nelson in a [2019 U.S. Courts article](#), adding that traditional litigation costs needless time and money. “Wanting to bring people together, in a collaborative, unifying system, I find there are a lot of people open to that.”

“Now is such a critical time for conflict resolution education and for WJC, which has seen the number of schools we work with nearly triple in the last two years,” said Elissa Barrett, WJC executive director. “We are here today because of the vision and dedication of our founder, Judge Dorothy Wright Nelson.”

Judge Nelson earned a Juris Doctor from UCLA School of Law in 1953 and a Master of Laws from the USC Gould School of Law in 1956. She was in private practice in Los Angeles, was a research associate to Prof. James Holbrook of the Gould law faculty and worked on a book on how to improve the justice system in Los Angeles County from 1954 until 1957. She joined the Gould School of Law as a faculty member in 1957 and held succeeding positions of rising authority; she was dean from 1969 to 1980, the first woman dean of a major American law school. She focused on training future lawyers in restorative justice and mediation as an alternative to litigation and produced leading academic research on the judicial administration of the courts.

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Judge Nelson was nominated to her seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit by President Jimmy Carter in September 1979, confirmed on Dec. 19, 1979, and received her judicial commission the next day. She continued her unique approach to the law, initiating one of the first mediation programs for a federal appellate court. Her model of alternative dispute resolution is now a staple of the American justice system.

Judge Nelson assumed senior status on Jan. 1, 1995 and remains active on the bench. For more than 60 years, she has taught generations of judges and lawyers the value of conflict resolution and the rule of law. Inspired by the principles of her Baha'i faith, her judicial opinions advocate for equality and due process for those who are most marginalized in our society.

Among her other accomplishments, she is the author of a book, "Cases and Materials on Judicial Administration and the Administration of Justice, 1974." Her awards include the American Bar Association D'Alemberte/Raven Award for Outstanding Contribution to Dispute Resolution, Los Angeles; Pasadena Bar Association's Judge of the Year; Thurgood Marshall Career Achievement Award; United Nations World Citizen of the Year Award; Pax Orbis ex Jure Medallion award for her role in helping to further world peace through law; and ADR Lifetime Achievement Award, a special award from the Ninth Circuit presented at the 2010 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.

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