



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CLERK
1 COURTHOUSE WAY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02210

Sarah Allison Thornton
CLERK OF COURT

PRESS RELEASE

January 7, 2009

The United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts announces that Magistrate Judge Joyce London Alexander, the longest serving Magistrate Judge in the history of the District, will retire effective February 1, 2009. Magistrate Judge Alexander, who was appointed in August 1979, last year became eligible for retirement and married the Honorable Johnny Ford, Mayor of Tuskegee, Alabama.

Chief Judge Mark L. Wolf said "my colleagues and I are grateful for Magistrate Judge Alexander's nearly 30 years of devoted service to the administration of justice. I know that the bar and her many admirers in the community join us in wishing Magistrate Judge Alexander great happiness in her well-earned retirement."

Throughout her career, Magistrate Judge Alexander, the recipient of numerous awards and honorary degrees, has been especially active in community and professional organizations, including service as President and co-founder of the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts; an Overseer of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Boston; Chairperson of the Judicial Council of the National Bar Association, the oldest organization of Black judges in the country; Chairperson of the Massachusetts Black Judges Conference; Chair of the Board of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and Trustee of Lesley University.

A particular focus of her interests have been programs to engage students in learning about the legal system. While Chairperson of the Massachusetts Black Judges Conference, Magistrate Judge Alexander developed a scholarship program recognizing minority students in Boston area law schools. In 1989, she created a program for the Federal Courts in Massachusetts called "Kids, Courts & Citizenship," designed to expose elementary students to practical learning about civics and alternatives to violence, guns and drugs. The "Kids, Courts & Citizenship" program yearly brings some 700 fifth grade students from the Boston public schools to her courtroom, not only to view proceedings and perform a mock trial, but to engage in discussions about the legal system with her, other judges, lawyers and law enforcement officials. The

"Kids, Courts & Citizenship" program provided a blueprint for other similar educational and community outreach programs developed and fostered by the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts when it moved to its new courthouse in 1998.

From January 1996 to December 1998, Magistrate Judge Alexander served as Chief United States Magistrate Judge for the District of Massachusetts, becoming the first African-American woman to serve as Chief Judge of any court unit in Massachusetts. Immediately prior to her appointment as the country's first African-American woman United States Magistrate Judge in 1979, Magistrate Judge Alexander served as Assistant Vice Chancellor and General Counsel for the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, while also serving as on-camera legal editor for WBZ-TV in Boston. A native of Cambridge, Magistrate Judge Alexander holds her undergraduate degree from Howard University and received her law degree from New England School of Law, where her work was honored in 2004 by the dedication of the entire summer edition of the New England Law Review to mark her twenty-fifth anniversary on the federal bench.

**Contact: Sarah Allison Thornton,
Clerk of Court
U.S. District Court, District of Massachusetts
(617) 748-9165
Sarah_Thornton@mad.uscourts.gov**