



Giselle Gutierrez, president of the Cuban American Bar Association.

COMMENTARY

Celebrating Trailblazers and Empowering Future Hispanic Women Judges

In the world of law and civil society, the profound and transformative contributions of Hispanic women have not gone unnoticed. Their relentless pursuit of justice and their pivotal roles in shaping legal futures have not only broken barriers but have paved the way for a stronger judicial system.

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To the Hispanic women judges who have shattered glass ceilings, who have stood firm as beacons of justice, and who have paved the way for future generations—this piece is dedicated to you and to the future generations of Hispanic women judges.

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Many have shown courage as first-generation Americans or possibly as the sole lawyer or college graduate in their families. They have also entered rooms where they were the only woman or, more specifically, the only Hispanic woman present. If you relate to any of these experiences, I celebrate your unwavering commitment to justice and your trailblazing spirit. Just last month, the Cuban American Bar Association had the privilege of celebrating many of these Hispanic women trailblazers in our judiciary during CABA's 2023 Judicial Forum and Luncheon, where we honored Hispanic women judges from 14 Judicial Circuits across Florida, Florida's Third District Court of Appeal, Florida's Supreme Court, and two federal courts in Florida. Each of the honorees a unique and inspiring story, a testament not only to the honoree's dedication but to upholding the law and serving the community. Their collective accomplishments underscore the invaluable contributions of Hispanic women jurists in ensuring the fairness and integrity of our legal system.

Despite much progress, minorities, including Hispanic women, remain notably underrepresented in the legal field compared to the overall population. Hispanic women experience some of the lowest representation of any racial or ethnic group in comparison to their overall presence in the national population. There is much

work to be done to bridge this gap and provide more opportunities for Hispanic women who aspire to serve in the judiciary.

This highlights the critical need to acknowledge women jurists who embody the legacy of immigrant heritage, defying odds and demonstrating that determination knows no bounds.

Simultaneously, we must also look ahead to empower the next generation of Hispanic women judges who will carry forward this legacy of distinction and diversity in the judiciary.

So, how can we empower the next generation of Hispanic women judges and ensure that they continue to break barriers and foster diversity within the legal profession?

The starting point, for any person serving on the judiciary, must be based in qualifications. The judicial system is the bedrock of a just and orderly society, and its effectiveness relies on the competence, knowledge, and impartiality of its judges. Qualification encompasses not only a deep understanding of the law but also the ability to apply it fairly and consistently. Judges must possess a strong ethical compass, an unwavering commitment to justice, and the capacity to make decisions that uphold the rule of law.

As to the Hispanic women who not only meet but exceed these and other qualifications, it is imperative that we promote and support their engagement in the judiciary. The “we” I allude to represents our collective responsibility and emphasizes the need for you and each one of us to wholeheartedly advocate for their potential.

Supporting this initiative means taking proactive steps to identify highly qualified candidates, offering mentorship or connecting them with experienced mentors along their various paths to serving on the judiciary, and advocating for them as opportunities arise, be it through the judicial nominating commissions or judicial elections. It means being an engaged contributor to their success. In doing so, we have the power to play a pivotal role in shaping a judicial system that mirrors the rich diversity of our society.

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