

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Vaino Spencer

PERSON

Spencer, Vaino, 1920-2016

Alternative Names: The Honorable Vaino Spencer; Justice Vaino Spencer;

Life Dates: July 22, 1920-October 25, 2016

Place of Birth: Los Angeles, California, USA

Residence: Los Angeles, CA

Occupations: State Superior Court Judge

Biographical Note

Superior Court Judge Vaino Hassan Spencer was born on July 22, 1920 in Los Angeles, California to Ada Nona and Abdul Hassan. Spencer graduated from Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles in 1938, and went on to receive her A.A. degree from Los Angeles City College in 1949. Spencer earned her L.L.B. degree from Southwestern University School of Law in 1952.

After obtaining her law degree, Spencer worked as a general practice attorney at law in Los Angeles until 1961. She then became the first African American woman to serve on the bench in California as the Municipal Court Judge for the Los Angeles Judicial District. Spencer served in this capacity until 1976, then was appointed as the Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge, a position she held until 1980.

In 1979, Spencer and fellow presiding justice Joan Dempsey Klein, founded the National Association of Women Judges, an organization intended to help promote women candidates on the bench. Spencer and Klein traveled around the country and met with judges, bar leaders, politicians and journalists to discuss the need for more women in the court room. The organization eventually set up a lecture series and established an annual conference for the association's growing membership.

In 1980, Spencer began serving as the Presiding Judge of the Division One California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, a position she held for over twenty years.

Throughout her career, Spencer served on a number of judicial and law oriented boards, including the Judicial Council Justice Planning Committee, the Judicial Council of California, the Los Angeles County Commission on Justice and the California Law Revision Committee. Additionally, Spencer received various accolades for her

groundbreaking law work, including the Outstanding Jurist Award in 2001, Metropolitan News-Enterprise' Person of the Year Award in 1991, and the 1985 Trailblazer Award from the National Association of Business and Professional Women.

Spencer was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 22, 2006.

Spencer passed away on October 25, 2016.

Related Entries

Polytechnic High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Los Angeles City College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Wadsworth Avenue Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Thomas Alva Edison Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Southwestern School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Self-Employed [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1952 to 1961]

Practicing Attorney, specializing in real estate

Los Angeles Municipal Court [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1961 to 1976]

Judge

Los Angeles County Superior Court [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1976 to 1980]

Justice

California Court of Appeal for the Second District [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to 2007]

Presiding Justice

National Association of Women Judges [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Co-Founder

Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Co-Founder

Democratic Minority Conference [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Co-Founder

International Association of Women Judges [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Co-Founder