



GERALDINE BLEDSOE FORD AWARD

Geraldine Bledsoe Ford was the first black woman in the United States to be elected to a judgeship as a non-incumbent. Born in 1926 in Detroit to attorney Harold E. Bledsoe and state civil servant Mamie Geraldine Bledsoe, Geraldine grew up in an atmosphere rich in discourse on the law, politics, and social equality.

A graduate of University of Michigan and Wayne State University Law School, Judge Ford distinguish herself as the first black woman to attain the position of Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan and the first black woman to serve as Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of Detroit. In 1966, Judge Ford scored a stunning upset victory and was elected to serve as a Detroit Recorder's Court judge. Although her candidacy was surrounded by clouds of skepticism, Ford's qualifications swept the election, and she led the ticket repeatedly for the next 33 years. After a court reorganization, she served another year as a Circuit Court Judge, before retiring in 1999.

During her career, Judge Ford focused on the retention and development of students at the University of Michigan as a central component of the actualization of affirmative action. Judge Ford's efforts to foster and encourage the development of African-American professionals benefitted the community at large

This annual WLAM award is intended to recognize individuals and organizations, including those outside of the legal profession, who support the advancement of women and minorities and have shown a commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion for all people, whether it be through recruiting and retaining women and minorities in key positions, having a significant percentage of women and minorities in executive positions or equity partnership levels, providing mentoring/sponsorship to women and minorities, promoting work-life management for women and minorities, providing increased leadership opportunities for women and minorities both internally and externally, handling legal matters which protect women's rights, or furthering the mission of the WLAM to promote equality and social justice for all people.

Nominations for this year's award will be accepted until **Friday, February 7, 2020.**

The nomination should contain a concise statement about the nominee and the reasons the nominee should receive this award. The award will be presented at the WLAM Annual Meeting, and **the recipient must be available April 18, 2020 to receive the award.**

Nominations should be sent via email to Donna MacKenzie, WLAM Immediate Past President, at DMacKenzie@olsmanlaw.com.