

The Honorable Patricia Ann McKinley



The Honorable Patricia Ann McKinley was born in San Francisco on April 11, 1949 and raised in the City of Richmond. A demonstrated leader at an early age, Judge McKinley entered the University of California at Berkeley in 1967. Embracing her love of travel, Judge McKinley spent a year studying at the University of Bordeaux in France where she became fluent in French. After graduating with a degree in French, Judge McKinley attended Boalt Hall School of Law.

Following her graduation from Boalt in 1971 and her extended travels to North and West Africa, Judge McKinley entered private practice in Oakland, California where she made a name for herself as a civil and criminal attorney. It was in these early years of her career that Judge McKinley became involved in various alumni, civic, and legal organizations. In 1979, Judge McKinley, along with Judge Judith Ford, invited several Black women lawyers to a meeting at Judge Ford's home to discuss forming an organization to not only combat the discrimination and isolation that many of them faced but also to support one another and to be a catalyst for change for Black women within the legal profession. It was from this historic meeting that Black Women Lawyers Association of Northern California ("BWLNC") was born.

In 1980, Judge McKinley accepted an offer to join the Richmond City Attorney's office where she balanced her desire to be an exceptional advisor to the City with her need to be an advocate for the poor, minority, and disenfranchised residents of her hometown. She also continued to travel the globe and added Turkey, Japan, and the South Pacific to her already extensive repertoire of international experiences.

By 1982, Judge McKinley's legal talents had come to the attention to Governor Jerry Brown who appointed her to the Bay District Municipal Court District. At 33, Judge McKinley was the youngest and first African American woman to be appointed to that court where she presided over civil and criminal cases in Contra Costa County. Judge McKinley admittedly welcomed this challenge because her hometown was within her jurisdiction. After three short years on the bench, Judge McKinley's colleagues on the bench named her Presiding Judge.

In 1986, after running unopposed and winning her judicial seat in 1984, Judge McKinley tragically lost her battle with cancer at the age of 37, but her legacy lives on. BWLNC celebrates the trailblazing accomplishments of Judge McKinley.