

CAPAJA NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2026

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HaPpY NeW Year!



President's Message



The start of a new year invites new beginnings - fresh opportunities to serve, grow, and embrace new roles. For our colleagues preparing to retire, it marks the beginning of a meaningful next chapter. This year, three past CAPAJA presidents will lay down their robes after a lifetime of service: Judge Holly Fujie (2020), Judge Roberta Hayashi (2019), and Judge Erica Yew (2007). Each of these trailblazers has left an indelible impact on the bench and on all of us who've had the honor of working alongside them. Their dedication and vision helped shape CAPAJA into the vibrant, dynamic community we are today. We look forward to their continued involvement and welcome all of our retired members to remain engaged in CAPAJA. This year, we are excited to launch a new committee dedicated to our retired members, providing a space to stay connected, share wisdom, and continue giving back in meaningful ways. The impending retirement of Judges Fujie, Hayashi, and Yew reminds us to continue our shared mission: to expand access to justice, to mentor the next generation, and to lift one another up.



Hon. Jana M. Seng

CAPAJA President 2025-2026

Los Angeles County



Judge Holly Fujie (2020-2021)



Judge Roberta Hayashi (2019-2020)



Judge Erica Yew (2007-2008)



New Judges



KEVIN LEE

San Bernardino County

On December 22, the San Bernardino Superior Court got a Holiday present with the appointment of Kevin Lee, our latest API judicial appointment. Soon-to-be Judge Lee has been serving as a Deputy Public Defender in the San Bernardino County Public Defender's Office since 2013. Welcome to CAPAJA, Kevin!

Past Events



This month, CAPAJA Members have been seen everywhere!

CAPAJA Members Enjoy an Evening with the Italian American Bar Association

On December 3, CAPAJA Members engaged in cross-cultural exchanges at the Italian American Bar Association of Los Angeles's Annual Supreme Court Night. See the photos below of CAPAJA Members hobnobbing with Supreme Court Justices, past and present, including Justice Carlos Moreno (ret.), Martin Jenkins (ret.) and Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero.



From left to right: Judge Grace Kim, Judge Ruth Kwan, Justice (ret.) Carlos Moreno, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Tiffany Tai, and Judge Christine Gonong.



From left to right: APJ Ricardo Ocampo, Judge Hoa Hoang, Judge Christine Gonong, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Tiffany Tai, Justice Audra Mori, Judge Bryant Yang, and Judge Grace Kim.



CAPAJA Members Get Dressed Up for the

LASC Holiday Party

CAPAJA Members held an impromptu reunion at the Los Angeles Superior Court Annual Holiday party on December 6 at the Athenaeum Club on the Cal Tech campus in Pasadena. See photos below of CAPAJA Members at their sparkliest!



Back row from left to right: Judge Adrian Roxas, Judge Rob Villeza, Judge Jana Seng, Judge Tim Saito, APJ Ricardo Ocampo, Judge Janet Hong, Judge Grace Kim, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Elaine Lu, Judge Curtis Kin, Judge Christopher Lui, Judge Helen Yang, Judge Tiffany Tai, Judge Linda Sun, and Judge Terry Truong.

First row from left to right: Judge Christine Gonong, Judge (ret.) Fumiko Wasserman, Judge (ret.) Lance Ito, Judge Ruth Kwon, and Judge Holly Fujie.



From top to bottom: Judge Grace Kim, Judge Tiffany Tai, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, and Judge Christine Gonong.

Shiny and Sassy at the WLALA party

And on December 10, CAPAJA Members shone at the Annual Holiday Party of the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles. The theme was Shiny and Sassy, and CAPAJA Members present were all that and more!



From left to right: Judge Grace Kim, Judge Ruth Kwan, Justice (ret.) Carlos Moreno, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Tiffany Tai, and Judge Christine Gonong.

Past CAPAJA Events





CAPAJA Member Honored with the Aranda Access to Justice Award

On December 12, San Francisco Superior Court Judge Bruce Chan received the Aranda Access to Justice Award. This is one of the California judiciary's most prestigious honors and was bestowed on Judge Chan for his pioneering work in creating San Francisco Superior Court's Young Adult Court (YAC) for young adults ages 18–25 facing felony charges, many of whom have experienced poverty, abuse and neglect, community violence, and homelessness. San Francisco's YAC was the first of its kind to recognize the neuroscience about young people's developing brains and to try to address the root causes of criminal conduct in transitional-age defendants in a way that rehabilitates them and ultimately promotes public safety. Judge Chan has successfully graduated more than 200 defendants from YAC over the last decade, and his extraordinary results have spawned similar Young Adult Courts around the country, including in the federal court.

Here's a link to the YouTube video about Judge Chan and the award:



- (starting at minute 27:55) Tribute video
- (starting at 31:24) Judge Jeffrey C. Kauffman introducing Judge Chan and presentation of the award
- (starting at 36:08) Judge Chan's moving acceptance speech

Bruce's story about creating the YAC provides a lot of hope, and we hope it inspires those of you who are thinking, in the new year, about ways we can give back and create lasting change.



CAPAJA Members in the News



CAPAJA Member Pens Article on Visit to Chinese Courts

On December 9, the Daily Journal published a fascinating article by CAPAJA Member Harold E. Khan, a retired judge of the San Francisco County Superior Court entitled “Visiting Chinese courts: Surprising parallels to U.S. Proceedings.” In his article, Harold recounted visits to a criminal trial at the Beijing Chaoyang District People’s Court and a civil appeal at the Shanghai First Intermediate People’s Court as part of a tour of the country led by CAPAJA Member Judge Julie Tang of the San Francisco Superior Court (ret.). Harold notes a number of similarities with

American trials and appeals, as well as many differences, including the active role of attorneys for the victim in the criminal trial and the substitution of two non-legally trained members of the public who, together with the presiding judge, decide the facts of the case instead of a jury. As Harold concluded his article, he stated: “Being able to observe Chinese court proceedings was an amazing, eye-opening experience to learn about China.” Thanks for the thoughtful and thought-provoking article, Harold! And congratulations to Julie on what was obviously an extremely successful and enjoyable trip!



Hon. Harold E. Kahn (Ret.)
Source: dailyjournal.com





Esther Kyungmin Ro

Los Angeles County Superior Court

Career Highlights: *Appointed Los Angeles County Superior Court judge by Gov. Gavin Newsom, Oct. 9, 2024; senior appellate attorney, 2nd District Court of Appeal, 2019-24; partner, associate, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP, 2011-19; Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Recovery fellow, Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, 2009-10; associate, Squire Sanders & Dempsey LLP (now closed), 2007-09*

Law School: *UCLA School of Law, 2007*

Source: dailyjournal.com/judicial_profile/10910

LASC CAPAJA Member

Profiled in DJ

On December 18, CAPAJA Member Judge Esther Ro of the Los Angeles Superior Court was profiled in an article entitled: “Judge Esther Ro followed her heart to a Superior Court seat.” The article described the first-birthday Korean ceremony ritual of *doljabi* - in which a child is placed on a mat surrounded by objects meant to hint at the child’s future. Esther has been told that at her own *doljabi*, she selected a pen for intellect/knowledge - an appropriate choice given her ultimate profession. The article’s subtitle of “Judge brings deliberation and care to crowded misdemeanor court” describes Esther’s judicial demeanor and philosophy and she concludes, “My courtroom is one tiny corner of the world. Every day I ask, ‘What

impact can I make on this corner?’” Great profile, Esther!



CAPAJA MEMBER TO BE HONORED

CAPAJA Member Judge Linda Liu Sun of the Los Angeles Superior Court will be honored as a Met News Person of the Year at the 36th holding of the event. Linda will be feted at the Athenaeum, located at 551 South Hill Street in Pasadena, on Jan. 23, 2026 with cocktails at 5:30 and dinner at 6 pm. The Met news article announcing the award, entitled “The Sun is a star. And Judge Linda Liu Sun is a rising star on the Los Angeles Superior Court” can be found here:



Hon. Linda Liu Sun
Source: metnews.com



The article, which recounts Linda’s illustrious career, features great pictures and quotes from many legal luminaries, including CAPAJA Members LASC APJ Ric Ocampo and Judges Akemi Arakaki and Jana Seng. It also discusses Linda’s being mentored as a young attorney by the late CAPAJA Member Ronald S.W. Lew. Congratulations, Linda!



CAPAJA *Calendar of Events*

January 2026

The New Rules on Exercising Peremptory Challenges, California Code of Civil Procedures § 231.7

Date: January 27, 2026, 12:15 - 1:30 pm

Location: Zoom

Hosted by: Education Committee

Contact: Judge Joseph Kang

February 2026

CAPAJA Malaysia Singapore 2026 (sold out)

Date: February 10 - 21, 2026

Location: Malaysia, Singapore

Hosted by: Travel Committee

Contact: Judge Teresa Magno



Pending Events (*dates to be determined)

Alternative Dispute Resolution Skills Workshop

Date: TBA

Location: Webinar

Hosted by: ALJ Committee

Contact: Annie Greenleaf and Kristin Rosi



CAPAJA Student Scholarship



CAPAJA will again award \$2500 scholarships to deserving law students working as judicial interns.

Your generous donations make these scholarships possible. If you are a judge, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to our Scholarship Fund through our website.

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