

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH, UCC
LAYMEN'S FELLOWSHIP
BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM
CELEBRATING THE NEW FACE OF JUSTICE
(BLACK FEMALE JUDGES)**



Special Guest Speakers

**Honorable Judge Shera Grant
Honorable Judge Shanta Owens**

February 10, 2019

***First Congregational Christian Church, UCC
Montgomery, Alabama***

Our Guest Speaker

The Honorable Judge Shera Grant



Judge Shera Grant is a District Court Judge in the Civil Division of Jefferson County. She presides over civil actions such as landlord tenant issues, creditor disputes, and money disputes not exceeding \$10,000. Judge Shera Grant grew up in Birmingham, AL and is a product of the Bessemer and Birmingham Public School Systems. She graduated from Ramsay Alternative High School. Judge Grant attended college at Alabama State University on a full academic scholarship and graduated *summa cum laude* with a degree in Computer Information Systems. While at Alabama State University, she was involved in various organizations such as the Society for the Advancement of Management, Co-Chair of Dean's Council of Students, member of Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society, and President of Delta Mu Delta National Business Honor Society. After college, Judge Grant attended law school at Louisiana State University. She also studied International and Comparative Law at the Université d'Aix-Marseille III in Aix en Provence, France. She was invited to become a member of the Wex Malone American Inn of Court, a prestigious legal organization which accepts law students who demonstrate outstanding trial advocacy skills. She graduated from law school on the Chancellor's list with dual degrees, Juris Doctor (J.D.) and a Bachelor of Civil Law (B.C.L.).

After graduating from law school, Judge Grant moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to begin her legal career. She worked as an assistant city solicitor with the City of Atlanta Solicitor's Office, prosecuting city offenses. While there, she helped develop an alternative sentencing program for youthful offenders in lieu of prosecution. In 2004, Judge Grant became an assistant district attorney with the DeKalb County District Attorney's Office, where she rose to several senior positions. While employed as the Senior Trial Attorney, she was responsible for the prosecution of Murder, Rape, Armed Robbery, and other violent felonies. In that capacity, she was the lead trial attorney for over 100 cases annually. Judge Grant's work ethic and expertise led to a promotion to Senior Special Prosecutor for the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Unit. She became one of two attorneys assigned to this unit that prosecuted the county's highest profile sexual assault and domestic violence cases. Outside of the courtroom, she educated the community regarding domestic violence and sexual assault prevention. Shortly thereafter, she was promoted once again to Chief Assistant of the Juvenile Court Division of the District Attorney's Office, where she helped manage that separate office and prosecute juveniles charged as adults on Georgia's seven deadly crimes.

After leaving Atlanta and returning home to Birmingham, she began her own law practice, The Grant Firm, LLC, where she had a general practice firm, handling a variety of civil and criminal cases throughout the state. Because of her previous leadership and management skills, she was asked to join the executive management team for the newly created Community Law Office, the county's public defender's office for indigent individuals charged with criminal offenses within the Birmingham division of Jefferson County. In that role, she focused on management of multiple trial teams, community outreach, and mission development. Judge Grant created the Community Law Office Leadership Academy, a youth development program for high school students to increase academic skills, critical thinking and reasoning and inspire students to make healthy positive life choices and promote awareness in public interest law. In addition, she hosted monthly forums at community based organizations discussing a variety of legal topics. She was awarded the Al.com's Young Professional's Project of the Year for creation of the Leadership Academy. In 2015, she was also awarded the NAACP Community Empowerment Award and was named as a "Women Who Shape The State" award recipient. In 2016, she received the following awards: Woman of the Year Award and Alabama State University's Silhouette of Service Award. In 2017, she received the following awards: INROADS Alumni of the Year and National Coalition of 100 Black Women's Spotlight Honoree for Outstanding Achievement in Public Policy Award. She is a graduate of Leadership Vestavia Hills and the Alabama State Bar Leadership Forum.

Judge Grant is a former board member for the Vestavia Hills Board of Education, becoming the first African American to be appointed to the city's school board. In addition, she is on the board of directors for Growing Kings and the Alabama State University Foundation Board. She is a former board member for Leadership Vestavia, Peace on the Move, Atlanta Civilian Review Board, Atlanta Contract Compliance Board, and the DeKalb Bar Association Board.

She is also a member of both the Alabama and Georgia State Bars. In January 2016, she was appointed by the Governor of Alabama to fill a judgeship vacancy as District Court Judge. In November 2016, she was elected and won a full term in the general election. She is married to Daryl Grant, a managing director with KPMG Advisory Services. They have two children, Madelyn and Grey. They attend Trinity Baptist Church.

Our Guest Speaker

The Honorable Judge Shanta Owens



Judge Shanta Owens, a product of both the Bessemer and Birmingham public school system, is a graduate of Ramsay Alternative High School. After completing high school, she went on to attend Alabama State University, where she was actively involved in the Society for the Advancement of Management as Community Service Coordinator, organizing several food drives for the homeless at various local shelters in the Montgomery area. Judge Owens was also a distinguished member of Alabama State University's Golden Ambassadors, an organization established by the President to introduce the University and its offerings to incoming students and parents and host and represent the University at alumni events. She was inducted into Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, elected Vice-President of Delta Mu Delta Business Honor Society, and hand-picked by the Dean of the College of Business Administration to serve as Chairperson of the Dean's Council of Students. Aside from these activities, Judge Owens excelled in her course work and was awarded the Colonial Bank Scholarship and recognized as a consecutive member of the Dean's List. During this time, she also received many awards for achieving status as a President's List recipient and an Inroads Scholar, both of which are awards given to college students who receive a 4.0 grade point average during a semester. Judge Owens graduated *summa cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Information Systems and set her sights on law school.

After completing her undergraduate studies, Judge Owens attended Louisiana State University School of Law and the Université D' Aix-Marseille III in Aix-en-Provence, France, where she enrolled in the dual degree program and received her Juris Doctor (J.D.) and Bachelor of Civil Law degrees. During her time at Louisiana State University School of Law, she was actively involved in Phi Delta Phi Legal Fraternity and Unification of Diversity Under the Law, an organization whose mission was to unite diverse cultures through legal awareness and activities.

After graduating from law school, Judge Owens returned home to Birmingham to begin her legal career. She worked as a deputy district attorney with the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office, where she rose to the position of Senior Trial Attorney in her assigned courtroom. While employed as the Senior Trial Attorney, she was responsible for the prosecution of Capital and Class A offenses, those being the most serious and heinous offenses under the law. In that capacity, she successfully prosecuted over 100 felony jury trials in Jefferson County, including several for Capital Murder.

In November 2008, Judge Owens was elected to the bench to serve as a District Judge in the criminal division for the 10th Judicial Circuit of Alabama. She currently is the Presiding Judge for the Drug Court program for the Birmingham Division of Jefferson County, a rehabilitation program for nonviolent drug offenders who want to live drug free lives. This is the *largest* Drug Court Program in the state of Alabama. Judge Owens is a member of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Alabama Association of Drug Court Professionals, Alabama District Judges Association, Alabama State Bar Association, and the Judicial Council of the Magic City Bar Association.

In addition, she is a member of the Board of Directors for the Addiction Prevention Coalition. She is a former board member for the Birmingham Public Library Board, Children's Village, Redmont School in the Waldorf Tradition, and Jones Valley Development Corporation. She is also a graduate of Project Corporate Leadership, 2011 graduate of Leadership Birmingham, 2014 graduate of Leadership Vestavia Hills, 2015 graduate of MOMENTUM Women's Leadership Organization, and a 2018 graduate of Leadership Alabama.

Judge Owens has been honored as Inroads Inc.'s 2017 Alumni of the Year, Birmingham Magazine's 2014 "Women Who Make a Difference," B-Metro Magazine's 2014 Fusion Award Recipient, 2014 Top 20 under 40 for Who's Who in Black Alabama, 2014 Best In Minority Business Awards for Encouraging Diversity, 2013 Alabama State University Silhouette of Service Honoree, 2011 NAACP Wonderful Outstanding Women Honoree, 2010 Alabama State University Outstanding Alumni in Law, 2010 Birmingham Magazine's Legal Eagles Edition, and 2009 Alpha Kappa Alpha Legacy of Leadership Honoree.

A proud wife and mother, she is married to her high school sweetheart, Rahman Owens, President of O.Jay Fence Company. They have a daughter, Berkeley Rae Owens, and a son, August Ali Owens.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH, UCC

638 High Street at Union Montgomery, AL 36106

Laymen's Fellowship

Black History Program

February 10, 2019

Darryl Sinkfield, Master of Ceremony



Prelude

Musicians

Welcome/Occasion

Curtis Stewart

Invocation

Deacon Theodore White

Music:

Henry Terry and the Carver High School Choir

Offertory

Ushers

Introduction of Guest Speakers

Honorable Judge Vanzetta McPherson, Retired

Guest Speakers

The Honorable Judge Shera Grant
The Honorable Judge Shanta Owens

Music:

Henry Terry and the Carver High School Choir

Presentation of Awards

Darryl Sinkfield and Curtis Stewart

Cecil St. Clair Legacy Award

Cecil St. Clair Award

Laymen's Appreciation Award

Recognition of Visitors and Guests

Darryl Sinkfield

"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

Audience (Please Stand)

Remarks and Benediction

Rev. Dr. Ferrell Duncombe

NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Congregational Christian Church and members of the Laymen's Fellowship welcome you to our Annual Black History Program. Please join us immediately following service in the Fellowship Hall for a reception as we honor our special guest and speakers.

Black Female

Circuit and District Judges

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Circuit Judge Nakita R. Blocton | 1. District Judge Debra Bennett-Winston |
| 2. Circuit Judge Agnes J. Chappell | 2. District Judge Deborah Biggers |
| 3. Circuit Judge Elisabeth A. French | 3. District Judge Pamela Wilson Cousins |
| 4. Circuit Judge Brendette B. Green | 4. District Judge Monet Gaines |
| 5. Circuit Judge Marshall Jackson Hatcher | 5. District Judge Shera C. Grant |
| 6. Circuit Judge Janine Hunt-Hilliard | 6. District Judge Pamela R. Higgins |
| 7. Circuit Judge Tamara Harris Johnson | 7. District Judge Lillie B. Jones-Osborne |
| 8. Circuit Judge Anita Kelly | 8. District Judge Tammy J. Montgomery |
| 9. Circuit Judge Javan J. Patton | 9. District Judge Tiffany McCord, |
| 10. Circuit Judge Carole C. Smitherman | 10. District Judge Shanta C. Owens |
| 11. Circuit Judge Patricia A. Stephens | 11. District Judge Lorraine W. Pringle |
| 12. Circuit Judge Tracie A. Todd | 12. District Judge Katrina Ross |
| 13. Circuit Judge Annetta H. Verin | 13. District Judge Debra Weston-Pickens |
| | 14. District Judge Briana C. Westry-Robinson |

First Congregational Christian Church

Laymen's Fellowship

The purpose of the Laymen's Fellowship is to join men of faith in a common purpose for God. We believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and we promote the mission of His Church. We support charitable, religious and educational programs of the Church and the community.

Membership

Darryl Sinkfield, Vice President	Jimmy Cal	Thomas McPherson
Curtis Stewart, Treasurer	Roosevelt Gooden	Felix Parker
Leon Forniss, Secretary	Williams Grimes	Marcus Payne
Chris Bass	Jermaine Hardin	Theodore White
Clifford Benson	George Lee	Timothy White
	Reggie Miller	

Lift Every Voice and Sing

By James Weldon Johnson

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us,
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand.
True to our God,
True to our native land.



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