



Constance L. Rice

Connie Rice, co-director of The Advancement Project, is a civil rights lawyer known for successfully tackling problems of inequity and exclusion in unorthodox ways. **She has received more than 50 major awards for her work in expanding opportunity and advancing multi-racial democracy.**

Rice graduated from Harvard College in 1978. She won the Root Tilden Public Interest Scholarship to New York University School of Law, where she earned her law degree in 1984. After law school, she served as law clerk to the Honorable Damon J. Keith, judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, and worked as a litigation associate at the law firm Morrison & Foerster. In 1991, she joined the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and became co-director of LDF's Los Angeles Office in 1996. **The credential she prizes most, however, is her first-degree black belt in the Korean martial art Tae Kwon Do.**

As a litigator, Rice has filed and won traditional class action civil rights cases redressing police misconduct, race and sex discrimination and unfair public policy in transportation, probation and public housing. She filed a landmark case on behalf of low-income bus riders that resulted in a mandate that more than 2 billion dollars be spent to improve the bus system. **And in 1999, Rice launched a coalition lawsuit that won \$750 million for new school construction in Los Angeles—money previously slated for less crowded, more affluent suburban school districts. In her legal work, Rice has led multi-racial coalitions of lawyers and clients to win more than \$10 billion in damages and policy**

changes. Added to the non-litigation work, Rice and her colleagues have led campaigns and bond initiatives that transferred over \$25 billion into systems that support the poor.

In her non-litigation work in the 1990s, Rice served as counsel to the Watts gang truce and spearheaded a statewide campaign to save equal opportunity programs. Mayors Tom Bradley and Richard Riordan appointed Rice to the governing board of Los Angeles' Department of Water and Power where she served as president and enacted contracting reforms and environmental advances. In 1998, Rice helped lead a successful campaign to place aggressive reformers on the Los Angeles Unified School District board in order to develop a competent school construction authority to build schools for the 100,000 students without seats in the desperately overcrowded district. And in 2003, Chief of Police William Bratton asked Rice to re-investigate the biggest police corruption scandal in Los Angeles history.

In 1998, the *Los Angeles Times* designated her one of 24 leaders considered the "most experienced, civic-minded and thoughtful people on the subject of Los Angeles." **In October 2000, *California Law Business* named her, along with Governor Gray Davis and Warren Christopher, as one of California's top 10 most influential lawyers. And in December 2006, *Los Angeles Magazine's* "definitive power list" determined that "Rice is the voice for LA's oppressed. Her Advancement Project firm...has picked up where Clarence Darrow left off."**

Frequently interviewed by both the local and national media, Rice has appeared on *60 Minutes*, *The Lehrer News Hour*, *Nightline*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, ABC's *This Week* and scores of cable, network, web and radio programs. Reporters for major publications regularly consult and quote her. Recent books that note her work are Nicholas Lemann's *The Big Test*; *Color-Blind* by Ellis Cose; *Race Rules* by Michael Eric Dyson, and *The Color Bind* by Lydia Chavez.

Rice is a co-founder of the Advancement Project, a public policy and legal action group that supports organizations working to solve community problems and address racial, class and other barriers to opportunity. **Hallmarks of her work include solving problems, reducing conflict, turning opponents into allies, and winning.**