



Charles J. Cook Servant Leadership Award

The Honorable Lora J. Livingston

Jurist. Advocate. Trailblazer. Leader. Yours is a story of unwavering dedication to justice, tireless work to promote access to legal services, and a commitment to uphold both the law and your faith.

After graduating from the UCLA School of Law in 1982, you served as a fellow at the Legal Aid Society of Central Texas, the first expression of your lifelong commitment to helping those in need.

In January 1999, you were sworn in as Judge of the 261st District Court, the first African American woman to serve on a district court in Travis County. Your colleagues elected you to serve as the Local Administrative District Judge for the Travis County Courts, a post you held for nine years during which you oversaw the design and construction of the new Travis County Civil and Family Courts Facility.

Your commitment to justice extends far beyond the courtroom. You have served on numerous boards and committees, including the Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation, Texas Access to Justice Commission, and the American Bar Association's Standing Committees on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants, Pro Bono and Public Service, and the Delivery of Legal Services. You helped establish the Travis County Self Help Center for self-represented litigants. Even in "retirement," you serve as the Interim Director of the Texas Access to Justice Commission.

Your witness at the complex intersection of faith and justice has made you a role model for lawyers and judges alike, a testimony to your belief that none of us is above the law and your ability to let faith inspire and inform your work without unfairly dictating the results. As you have written: "I pray for the courage to do the just and right thing, even within the bounds of laws I don't believe are just or right."

As a long-time member of St. James' Episcopal Church, serving as senior warden from 2000-2003 at a time when this historically Black congregation was becoming ethnically diverse, you have supported these followers of Jesus in their aspiration to be "an inclusive multicultural community." St. James' members describe your leadership as "compassionate," "good-humored," "accountable," "fierce," and "wise." Your friends Joyce Christian and Rudy Green recall, "Lora has always been an individual of high moral standards and a loyal friend. She has consistently demonstrated a commitment to hard work, fairness and concern for the well being of all. "

In 2015 you were called to join the Board of Trustees of Seminary of the Southwest, where your deep faith and keen sense for fairness and equity were critical components of the seminary's health during a time of tremendous growth. As chair of the Faculty and Education committee since 2017, you helped lead Southwest through a period of faculty expansion, curriculum revision, and that all important work of approving sabbaticals! Your voice on this and the Executive Committee was fundamentally influential on how the seminary committed itself to working towards Beloved Community in its curriculum, its staffing, and on the Board of Trustees itself. This past spring, you co-chaired the committee that successfully led the search and selection of Seminary of the Southwest's ninth Dean and President, Dr. Scott Bader-Saye.

The wider world has recognized your impact with many awards, including the Spirit of Excellence Award from the American Bar Association and the Distinguished Jurist Award from the African American Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Texas. Your dedication to education and mentorship, particularly in teaching trial advocacy skills to law students, has shaped the next generation.

In recognition of your exemplary service, witness and leadership, Seminary of the Southwest is honored to present you with the 2024 Charles J. Cook Award for Servant Leadership.