

Blackboard



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Constance Baker Motley *First Black Woman Federal Judge*

Constance Baker Motley was born in New Haven, Connecticut on September 14, 1921. Both of her parents came from the West Indies. She attended Fisk University, a historically Black college, and received a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree from New York University.

As a law student at Columbia University, Constance Motley began working with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF). She received her law degree from Columbia in 1946.

The Legal Defense and Educational Fund was founded in 1939. It is not a part of the NAACP. LDF helped win every one of the famous major civil rights cases since 1940.

Between 1961 and 1964, Constance Motley won nine major civil rights cases before the Supreme Court of the United States. She **represented** Autherine Lucy in her efforts to go to the University of Alabama. She also represented James Meredith (see *The ADVANCER*, Vol. 4 No. 16) in his efforts to go to the University of Mississippi.

In 1964, Constance Motley became the first Black woman senator in New York history. The next year, she became the first woman to serve as the president of the borough of Manhattan. She was elected president by the **unanimous** vote of the New York City Council.

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson



named Constance Baker Motley judge of the United States Circuit Court for the Southern District of New York.

Constance Motley is a true role model

for Black women. She says that "it is important for women, and especially [Black] women to become involved and to hold public office."

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—Constance Baker Motley