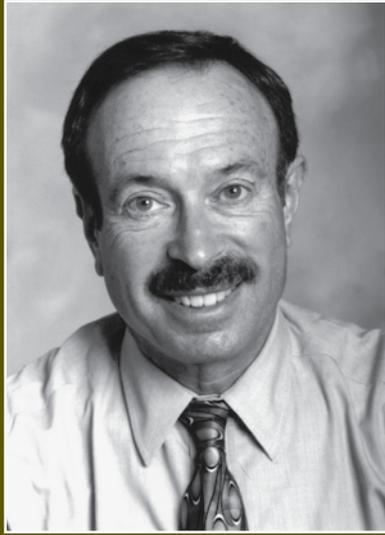


THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA



2009
Loren Miller
Legal Services
Award



Robert Gnaizda

“Bob was a visionary. He would envision the possibility of a new lawsuit. He didn’t just look to see what was done and try to do it in another context, he would look to see what hadn’t been done but needed to be done, and figure a way to do it. That’s the best of lawyering as far as I’m concerned.”

— Hon. Thelton E. Henderson, Senior United States
District Judge, Northern District of California



Robert Gnaizda has devoted more than 40 years, nearly his entire legal career, to advocating for California's poor, minority and other underserved communities. After serving five years as a trial tax attorney for the U.S. Treasury Department and with McKenna & Fitting, Mr. Gnaizda co-founded California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) in 1966 and was the Statewide Director of Litigation and Deputy Director until 1971. Today CRLA with more than 20 offices in the state continues to ensure that the rural poor in California have access to justice.

In 1971, Mr. Gnaizda co-founded Public Advocates in San Francisco, a nonprofit law firm and advocacy organization that challenges the systemic causes of poverty and racial discrimination. Public Advocates is the nation's first public interest law firm focusing exclusively on minority rights. He was Senior Partner and Litigator from 1971 – 1974 and 1977 – 1993.

In 1993, Mr. Gnaizda co-founded Greenlining Institute, a public policy, research and advocacy organization that empowers communities of color and other disadvantaged groups through multi-ethnic economic and leadership development, civil rights, and anti-redlining activities. From 1993 – 2008, he was General Counsel and Policy Director, and currently is working as a part-time consultant. He is also Of Counsel for major economic justice organizations such as the Black Economic Council, the Latino Business Chamber of Greater Los Angeles, and Mabuhay Alliance.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Gnaizda has litigated more than 100 class action court and administrative cases in the areas of minority economic empowerment, civil rights and government benefits. A few of his most successful litigation efforts include:

- *Weatherton v. Growers Farm Labor Assn.* (1969) 275 Cal.App.2d 168. Established rights of foreign-born agricultural workers to become members of established farm workers unions in California.
- *National Organization for Women v. Bank of California, National Association* (N.D. Cal 1972) WL 246; Fair Empl. Prac. Case (BNA) 26, 5 Empl. Prac. Dec. P8510 (No. C-72-441 FRP (Dec. 14, 1972). Instituted more open promotion policies for women and people of color in the banking industry and at the time was the largest class action in U.S. history.
- *Western Addition Community Organization et al. v. Frank N. Alioto, et al.* (N.D. Cal. 1972) 340 F.Supp. 1351. Successfully challenged bias in civil service exams intended to discriminate against African American firefighter candidates.
- *Officers for Justice v. Civil Service Commission of City and County of San Francisco* (D.C. Cal 1973) 371 F.Supp. 1328. Successfully challenged discriminatory hiring policies of police departments against women and minorities. The resolution of this case led to significant modification of discriminatory elements for candidacy.

Other successful legal efforts include voter discrimination hearings that were instrumental in supporting President Lyndon B. Johnson's efforts to pass the Civil Rights Voting Act of 1965; a federal court case in 1967 that resulted in mandated food stamps for all eligible participants in every U.S. county; a federal court case in 1973 that led to an administrative ruling that made free school breakfasts for qualified participants mandatory in every U.S. public school; and a class action filed in 1982 that resulted in injunctive relief prohibiting the dumping of billions of "surplus" government cheese into the ocean and distribution to the poor.

During the last 20 years, Mr. Gnaizda led corporate responsibility reform of private industries by leveraging the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 as the basis to intervene in utility rate cases and bank mergers, and to rectify discriminatory imbalances in the banking industry. As a result, more than \$2.5 trillion in corporate philanthropy has benefited some of California's most underserved communities.

Robert Gnaizda has authored or co-authored numerous articles on minority economic development and opportunities. He also has received more than 100 awards from various minority organizations for unique or distinguished services provided on behalf of their organizations and the communities they have represented.

The Loren Miller Legal Services Award was created in 1977 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the State Bar of California. The award is given annually and honors an attorney who has demonstrated long-term commitment to legal services and who has personally done significant work in extending legal services to the poor.



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