

# Lesson 8 - Lecture Notes

## Minority Justices: In the Face of Adversity

- I. Otis M. Smith
  - A. First African-American Michigan Supreme Court Justice
  - B. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, 1922
  - C. Education
    - 1. Fisk University
    - 2. Syracuse University
    - 3. J.D. from Catholic University Law School in Washington D.C.
  - D. Appointed to the Bench in 1961 and served through 1967
  - E. Adversity: Served at a time of unrest, when civil rights issues were being hotly debated across the nation. Because of his light skin, he was both accepted and discriminated against by Whites and African Americans
  - F. Involvement/Personality
    - 1. Civil and Courteous
    - 2. Active with NAACP and Big Brothers
- II. Mary S. Coleman
  - A. First woman to serve on the Michigan Supreme Court
  - B. Born in Forney, Texas, 1914
  - C. Education
    - 1. University of Maryland
    - 2. Law School - George Washington University
  - D. Served from 1973-1982 after election in 1972
  - E. Served as Chief Justice from 1979-1982
  - F. Credited with
    - 1. Reorganizing the Michigan Court system
    - 2. Interpreting the 1963 Constitution's call for "one court of justice"
- III. Dorothy Comstock Riley
  - A. First woman appointed to the Michigan Court of Appeals
  - B. First Hispanic woman on a state supreme court
  - C. Adversity: Interviewed with law firms at a time when there were very few women lawyers. The first question she was often asked was how fast she could type. So,

she practiced on her own for six years and made a name for herself that way.

- D. Born in Detroit, 1924
- E. Education
  - 1. B.A. Wayne State University
  - 2. Legal training at Wayne State University
- F. Supreme Court service
  - 1. Served on the Supreme Court from 1982-1983
  - 2. Served again from 1985-1997
- G. Retired with Parkinson's Disease setting in
- H. Founder of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society

IV. Conrad L. Mallett, Jr.

- A. First African-American Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court
- B. Born in Detroit, 1953
- C. Education
  - 1. B.A. University of California - Los Angeles
  - 2. J.D. University of Southern California
- D. Served the Court from 1990 - 1998
  - 1. Appointed in 1990
  - 2. Re-election to 2-year term in 1992
  - 3. Re-election in 1994 to 8-year term
  - 4. Resigned in 1998 to practice in the private sector
- E. Career
  - 1. Director of Legislative Affairs for Michigan Governor James J. Blanchard from 1983-1984
  - 2. Director and Executive Assistant to Detroit Mayor Coleman Young from 1985-1986
- F. Involvement
  - 1. Numerous state and national legal organizations
  - 2. NAACP member

V. Dennis W. Archer

- A. Born in Detroit, 1942
- B. Education
  - 1. Wayne State University - studied pharmacy
  - 2. Western Michigan University - transferred there to become a History teacher but became a Special Education teacher
  - 3. Worked on Law Degree at night at Detroit College of Law
- C. Service to the Michigan Supreme Court
  - 1. Appointed to the Supreme Court in 1985

2. Elected to an 8-year term in 1986
  3. Resigned in 1990 to resume private practice
- D. Became Mayor of Detroit
- E. Involvement
1. Numerous professional organizations
  2. NAACP life-member
  3. Michigan Cancer Foundation
  4. Other Organizations