

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As your Board strives to remain present for you during these largely virtual times, we present the Association of Black City Attorneys Newsletter!

Our goal is to present current events, office news, MCLEs, webinars, cultural happenings, and other information we hope will be of use to you on a quarterly basis.

Our first volume will have four parts in honor of Black History Month, and highlight game changing historical figures.

As the year progresses, we invite our membership to contribute to the newsletter for OpEd pieces, news and the like. All inquiries and interest can be emailed to us at lacityabca@gmail.com.



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Robert Sengstacke Abbott – Born in 1870 to former slaves, Abbott spent his childhood in St. Simons, Georgia. He studied the printing trade while at Hampton and obtained his law degree from Kent State at 28 years old. Abbott spent several years attempting to open a law firm, and in 1905 found himself in Chicago. It was there that he made history, founding ‘The Chicago Defender’ newspaper which would grow to become the largest circulating Black-owned newspaper in the nation. Radical for its time, the newspaper pushed the following core principles: destroying American race prejudice; opening trade unions for all; Black representation in the President’s Cabinet; hiring Black engineers, firemen, railroad conductors and government employees; government

funded schools prioritizing American students, hiring Black employees on motor bus lines across the nation; federal legislation to abolish lynching; and full enfranchisement of all American citizens. The paper’s message was so prolific that in 1914 the Governor of Illinois appointed Abbott to the Chicago Commission of Race Relations. The paper gained widespread popularity with its zinging editorials on race and equality. Its success allowed Abbott to become a philanthropist on many social justice fronts, and he remained such until his death in 1940.



Charlotta Bass – Ms. Bass was the first African American woman to run for Vice President of the United States. She did so in 1952 on the Progressive Party ticket. In her early 20s she worked in Rhode Island for a Black newspaper called ‘Providence Watchman.’ She transitioned her 10 years of experience to California when she was 36 years old and took a job with ‘The Eagle,’ another Black-owned newspaper. Within two years’ time, after the original owner fell ill, she purchased the publication at auction and became the first Black female owner of a national publication in the U.S. Renaming the paper ‘The California Eagle,’ Ms. Bass’ work led it to become the largest Black newspaper on the West coast. She quickly gained increasing notoriety as a result of the paper’s demands for social justice and began to tour the nation speaking out against racial injustice. She continued her advocacy for years despite constant threats from the Ku Klux Klan, FBI and State Department. After winning only .2% of the popular vote with Progressive Party presidential candidate Vincent Hallinan (on a platform of civil rights, decent jobs, peace, and equality), Ms. Bass retired to Lake Elsinore. She continued her advocacy until her death in 1969.



Honorable Jane M. Bolin – Judge Bolin was the first Black woman to attend Yale, first to join the New York Bar, and the first to serve as a judge in the United States. Born to a lawyer father and immigrant mother, Bolin attended Wellesley College where she graduated in the top 20 percent of her class, and then from Yale Law School as the only Black student and one of three women students. In July 1939, after seven years of legal practice, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia named Bolin judge of the Domestic Relations Court. She served as the sole Black female judge in the nation for 20 years, and in her position for 40 years until she retired at 70 years old. Post retirement, Judge Bolin remained an advocate of children’s rights, volunteered her time to New York City public schools, and served on the New York State Board of Regents. She received honorary degrees from Tuskegee, Williams College, Hampton, Western College for Women and Morgan State. Judge Bolin died at 98 years old in 2007.

****REMINDER**** Please save the date of February 10, 2021 at 11AM for a special Webinar by Dr. Thomas Parham. He will give a lecture on Black Americans and duality in the workplace, and how it can and has been exacerbated by current events in our nation and pandemic fatigue. Q&A will follow. Zoom registration link coming soon.