



# CITATIONS

JANUARY - TWO THOUSAND TWENTY THREE



## Justice Hernaldo Baltodano Joins Division Six

*by Christal Porter and Ben Baumer*

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# PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

by *Brian C. Israel*



Happy New Year! As we begin to make our way personally and professionally through 2023, I want to express that it is a great pleasure and honor to be President of the Ventura County Bar Association this year. Perhaps you have made a New Year’s resolution for your professional life and/or personal life. Perhaps you are not one for resolutions. My resolutions revolve around family, work and the Los Angeles Lakers.

To say that being a Lakers fan is part of my identity is not a lie. For years, in my pre-children, pre-lawyer years, I would catch all 82 games, whether on TV, streaming, or in-person. While I got to catch the tail end of the Showtime years, the Kobe-Shaq years were formative in my life. Following that, the Kobe-Pau era brought a Game Seven victory against the Boston Celtics on the day of my college graduation! It was one of the best memories in my fandom.

Chick Hearn, the legendary announcer for the Lakers, was an eloquent and thoughtful commentator. His way with words rivals some of the best jurists our profession has seen. His voice (much like Vin Scully of the Dodgers) occupies a nostalgic place in my mind. “This game’s in the refrigerator: the door is closed, the lights are out, the eggs are cooling, the butter’s getting hard and the Jell-O’s jigglin’!” When you heard this line, you knew the Lakers were going to win; that you could celebrate with your fellow fans, your little community. Well, maybe not little, but listening to Chick Hearn made me feel a part of the Lakers family.

It’s that sense of community that I also feel with VCBA. As President, my resolution for 2023, centers around that keyword – **community**. Personally, and professionally, this word is guiding and inspiring my 2023. The VCBA is the glue for our local legal community. It brings together our colleagues and offers opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Sometimes, our legal community can feel so disparate. While it is so valuable to network and learn from those who practice a similar type of law, perhaps it is even more important to extend our community and learn from those who do not work in our specific field. In my mind, having a narrow network is akin to being down a key player. (Lakers fans probably instantly thought of Anthony Davis). The Lakers and our community are at its best when we all come together. This year I want to encourage everyone to not only just become a VCBA member, but to join us at at least one event. It could be a networking social, an MCLE or a section meeting. To further strengthen our community, we need the

perspectives of all our local legal attorneys and professionals.

As President, I plan on hosting two events this year, which I will dub, the “Community Social.” Be on the lookout for flyers. This is simply an opportunity to come together and meet each other. Assuredly, I may chat about the Lakers with some of you, but I also hope that we can use this as a chance to show off our diverse community and to learn of opportunities that we may have not known existed.

I look forward to 2023. To meeting you. To continuing to build VCBA. To strengthening our community. I wish you all a happy New Year.



*Brian C. Israel is an associate attorney at Norman Dowler, LLP in Ventura. His practice focuses on estate planning, probate, and trust administration. He can be reached at [bisrael@normandowler.com](mailto:bisrael@normandowler.com) or at 805-654-0911.*

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## BARRISTERS CORNER:

by *Leonidas Nicol*

It has been my pleasure to serve as the 2022 VCBA Barristers President. I want to thank all of the members of the board for making this year possible. I also want to thank everyone who showed up to our events and provided support.

I am pleased to announce that the VCBA Barristers have elected their 2023 slate of officers and members at large: **Kristine Tijam**, president; **Ian Elsenheimer**, vice president; **Ben Baumer**, treasurer; and **Christal Porter**, secretary. The following individuals were elected as members at large: past president, **Leonidas Nicol**; **H. Frederick Seigenfeld**; **Bryce Wallgard**; **Elizabeth Harrier**; **Julian Gonzalez**; and **Jack Ucceferi**.

Barristers are proud to present the “Bridging the Gap 2023” MCLE event on Saturday, Jan. 21. This event is open to all attorneys and is a great way to get those difficult to obtain credits in competence, elimination of bias, and ethics. The program also provides three general credits for a total of six credits. The MCLE compliance deadline for those with last names beginning with N-Z is just around the corner on Feb. 1. For those whose compliance deadline is further out, why not make a New Year’s resolution to get a jump on your MCLEs? See the flyer in this issue for more information.

We have a number of exciting events planned for 2023, and we hope that you will join us. If you are a member of the Bar and are 35 years old or younger, or if you have been practicing law for less than seven years, you are a Barrister! If you are interested in getting more involved with the Barristers, feel free to email us at [LGN@qlflaw.com](mailto:LGN@qlflaw.com) or simply make it out to an event.



*Leonidas Nicol is an associate attorney at Quirk Law Firm, LLP focusing on plaintiff personal injury litigation. He can be reached at [LGN@QLFLaw.com](mailto:LGN@QLFLaw.com)*



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# JUSTICE HERNALDO BALTODANO JOINS DIVISION SIX

by *Christal Porter and Ben Baumer*

The Second District Court of Appeal, Division Six, recently **welcomed Justice Hernaldo Baltodano** to the bench and he graciously received Barristers **Christal Porter** and **Ben Baumer** for an interview intended to get to know him better, not only as a jurist, but as a human being. The meeting inspired and transformed us both.

## The Person Behind the Robe

Justice Baltodano exudes humility and puts the **grit** in integrity with a work ethic that routinely sees him in the office before the sun rises. For him, it is a labor of love and reverence for our profession that drives him to serve with diligence, humility, and humanity. When he was an infant, Justice Baltodano and his family immigrated to California in the 1970s, seeking, as he says, “the safety and promise of America.” Although they could only provide a modest upbringing because of educational and language limitations, Justice Baltodano’s parents raised him to have empathy and compassion for everyone. Those values help Justice Baltodano see the faces behind the cases with the knowledge that litigants “remember how you make them feel.” It was clear to us that Justice Baltodano’s desire to honor his parents’ sacrifices (and those of all hard-working Americans) motivates his pursuit of excellence.

From his years of employment litigation experience at various law firms (2002-2011), to co-founding and growing a thriving plaintiff employment law practice with his attorney wife (2011-2017), to serving as a Superior Court judge and then supervising criminal judge in San Luis Obispo County (2017-2022), Justice Baltodano’s legal experience reaches broadly. He not only possesses a voracious appetite for learning and continuing education, Justice Baltodano also devotes many hours to mentoring students, lawyers, and judges from all walks of life. And although he did not mention it during our interview, we learned that Justice Baltodano and his attorney wife have contributed many hours of their legal expertise (pro bono) to serving the most vulnerable and underserved in their communities.

To get a more comprehensive overview of Justice Baltodano’s legal and personal

background, we encourage you to visit Commission on Judicial Appointments: Judge Hernaldo J. Baltodano - YouTube, which includes testimonies from colleagues (including retired **Justice Martin Tangeman**, whom Justice Baltodano replaced) and Justice Baltodano’s moving personal remarks during his confirmation hearing.

## The Call to Service

Justice Baltodano joined the bench in 2017, shortly after a very contentious presidential election. During that time, our nation was experiencing extreme political discord and division. Because of the tumultuous political climate, Justice Baltodano became concerned about the toxicity in our public discourse. He believed that serving as a judge would give him the opportunity to create an environment within the judicial branch of our democracy based on respect and civility where all people would be heard. Because of his diverse life experiences and values, Justice Baltodano believed he could make a difference in society by serving as a judge. Justice Baltodano believes that no one should be pigeonholed into having preordained opinions on political issues solely because of party affiliation and labels. Instead, Justice Baltodano values and pursues independent, critical thinking and civil discourse on the pressing issues facing all litigants who come to the courts seeking justice.

## Wisdom for Barristers

Below is a summary some of the more salient Q and A from our time with Justice Baltodano:

Q: As a justice, what are your pet peeves?

A: Overwritten and repetitive briefs; personal attacks on opposing counsel are ineffective.

Q: What advice can you provide young attorneys?

A: Practicing law is a learned profession, not just a job. Lawyers are not only zealous advocates for their clients, but ambassadors for our system of justice and democracy. Treat your role as a lawyer and counselor with the respect and awe it deserves. Facilitate access to justice by mentoring

the most needy or vulnerable, or through pro bono work. Take pride in everything you do as a lawyer, and that includes how you treat people. There is a technical part and a relational part to being an effective attorney; being kind and exuding humility is underrated. Do not compromise your values and be mindful in building your brand as a young lawyer. Legal briefs from a lawyer with a good reputation carries weight, especially with the time constraints that bench officers face every day. Integrity, civility, and reliability translate to credibility with the bench.

Q: Do you have a favorite quote or mantra?

A: Things happen for a reason, so don’t dwell on the negative. Always do the right thing, especially when no one is watching.

Q: If you could travel to any time in history, who would you like to have a conversation with and why?

A: MLK, Thurgood Marshall, RBG, Jackie Robinson. Courage is important for lawyers and judges. As the first African American to join Major League Baseball, Jackie Robinson faced an incredibly hostile environment. He epitomized courage – not only on the baseball field – but in society at large.

Q: What do you see for the immediate future of Division 6?

A: In the next few months I expect another justice will be confirmed to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of **Justice Steven Perren**. And we will continue to grapple with the remedial criminal justice legislation coming from Sacramento.

## Gratitude

One theme Justice Baltodano reiterated throughout our interview was his appreciation for his family and colleagues and staff at the Court of Appeal. He feels immeasurably welcomed and supported by his fellow justices, research attorneys, clerks, secretaries, administrative staff, and the care and protection provided by California Highway Patrol.



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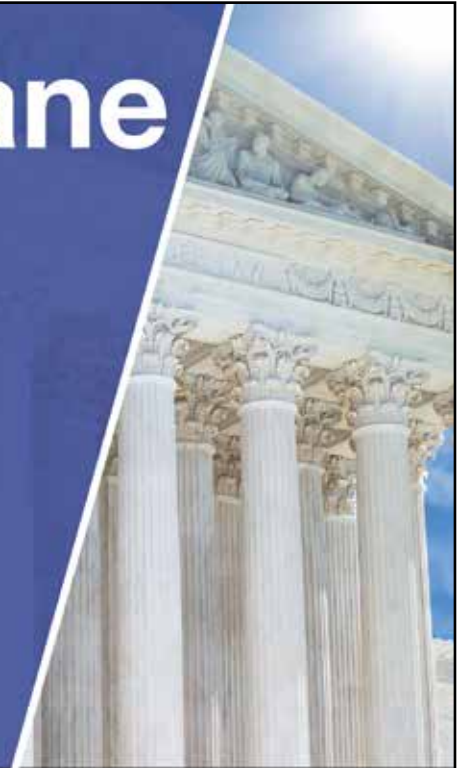
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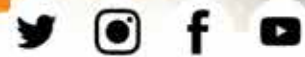
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### Dee Dinnie

Managing Attorney  
dee.dinnie@ventura.org

### Jim Allen

Senior Child Support Attorney  
jim.allen@ventura.org

### Michael Marcelo

Senior Child Support Attorney  
michael.marcelo@ventura.org

### Elina Avagimova

Child Support Attorney  
elina.avagimova@ventura.org

### Michael Ocampo

Child Support Attorney  
michael.ocampo@ventura.org

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