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May 17, 2021

Law School News

The Honorable Edward C. Clifton: Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa

RWU Law celebrates a leading Rhode Island jurist who has, throughout his illustrious career, displayed exceptional devotion to social justice and increasing access to justice for all.

May 17, 2021

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Michael M. Bowden



The Honorable Edward C. Clifton, Associate Justice, Rhode Island Superior Court (Ret.); RWU Law Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa '21

This Friday, May 21, Roger Williams University School of Law will present the degree of *Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa*, to the Honorable Edward C. Clifton, who served as an Associate Justice on the Rhode Island Superior Court for more than 20 years, before retiring in 2015.

Following service in the U.S. Army, and after completing his B.A. at the University of California, Berkeley, and his J.D. at the University of California, Los Angeles, Clifton first came to the Ocean State to work at Rhode Island Legal Services under a national fellowship program that assigned service-minded young lawyers to poor communities around the country.

He later joined the Rhode Island Public Defender's office, and in 1978 entered private practice as a partner at the firm of Stone, Clifton and Clifton. From 1985 to 1991, he was City Solicitor for the City of Providence.

Judge Clifton was appointed to the Rhode Island District Court in 1993, and to the Rhode Island Superior Court a year later. He presided over the state's first adult drug court. Since his retirement, he has volunteered with the Supreme Court Appellate Mediation Program.

Judge Clifton served on the Rhode Island Supreme Court's Permanent Committee on Women & Minorities for 17 years, including six as chair. In 2020, he was appointed to the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Rhode Island Courts. He is a member and past president of the Board of Directors of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts. He was Distinguished Jurist in Residence at RWU Law from 2015 until 2018.

An original incorporator and past president of the Thurgood Marshall Law Society of Rhode Island, Judge Clifton has served on many boards and committees, including RWU Law's Board of Directors from 2009 until 2020. Among numerous other awards and honors, he received RWU Law's 2018 Champions for Justice Award, recognizing his "exceptional devotion to social justice and increasing access to justice for all."