



225th Anniversary
1789-2014



Constance Baker Motley

Born:

September 14, 1921
New Haven, CT

Received Commission:

August 30, 1966

Died:

September 28, 2005

Judge Motley was appointed United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York on August 30, 1966 and entered on duty September 9, 1966. She was the first African American female to serve as a federal judge, the first African American judge in the S.D.N.Y. and the first female judge in the S.D.N.Y. She served as Chief Judge from 1982 to 1986, when she assumed senior status. She received a B.A. degree from New York University in 1943 and an LL.B. degree from Columbia University School of Law in 1946.

Judge Motley was president of the Borough of Manhattan from 1965 to 1966 and a member of the New York State Senate from 1964 to 1965. She was a member of the legal staff of the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Education Fund from 1945 to 1965 and a member of the New York State Advisory Council on Employment and Unemployment Insurance from 1958 to 1964.

Judge Motley drafted the original complaint in *Brown v. Board of Education*. She was the first African American woman ever to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court and was successful in nine of the ten cases she argued before the Supreme Court. The position she urged in the tenth case eventually became the position adopted by the Supreme Court. She successfully represented James Meredith in his effort to become the first black student at the University of Mississippi.

Judge Motley received the Medal For Excellence, Columbia Law School Alumni Association, in April, 1987. Judge Motley published her autobiography, "Equal Justice Under Law," in June, 1998. She was awarded the Federal Bar Council's Emory Buckner Medal for Outstanding Public Service on November 22, 2000. Judge Motley has received honorary degrees from many institutions.

Future S.D.N.Y. Judge Laura Taylor Swain served as her law clerk.