

The Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey

M.E.N.T.E.

**Mental
Education &
Nurturing
Through
Engagement**



2022
Conference
Program



**Tuesday, May 17, 2022
5:00-6:30PM**



via Zoom



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2022

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Tabatha Castro, Esq., President, Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey (HBA-NJ)
President and Managing Partner, The Castro Firm, Inc.

Reynold Lambert, Esq., Immediate Past President
Partner, Lowenstein Sandler LLP

PANELIST INTRODUCTIONS

Alex J. Fajardo, Esq. ME.N.T.E. Co-Chair & Finance Director
Associate, Stark & Stark

BREAK THE STIGMA EMPOWER SELF CARE GUIDE TOWARD HELP

Raul Ayala, Esq., *Office of the Federal Public Defender*
Ruben Lambert, Psy. D., *Wisdom Spring Wellness*
Lauren Martinez, Esq., *New Jersey Office of Attorney Ethics*
Ramon Ortiz, Esq., *New Jersey Lawyers Assistance Program*
Grissel Seijo, Esq., *Discovery, Inc.*

CLOSING REMARKS

Maria Cortes, ME.N.T.E. Co-Chair & Trustee - Region 13 (Atlantic & Cape May Counties)
Associate, Holland & Knight
Alex J. Fajardo, Esq.

2021-2022 HBA-NJ PRESIDENT

Tabatha Castro, Esq.

President and Managing Partner, The Castro Firm, Inc.



Born to Puerto Rican parents, Ms. Castro is a native of New York and a graduate of the University at Buffalo and Buffalo State College, earning her Bachelor of Arts degrees in Latin American Studies and Legal Studies and her Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice. She attended Widener University School of Law, where she was on the Moot Court Honor Society Executive Board and founded and became the first President of the Latin American Law Student Association.

Ms. Castro is the President and Managing Attorney of The Castro Firm, Inc., a minority- and woman-owned regional law firm specializing in New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Florida legal matters. She is licensed to practice law in the states of New Jersey and Delaware. Ms. Castro is admitted to practice law before the United States Supreme Court, Federal District Courts of New Jersey and Delaware, the Delaware Supreme Court and New Jersey Supreme Court.

Tabatha worked as a law clerk and then became associated with the law firm of Doroshow, Pasquale, Krawitz & Bhaya. Thereafter, she practiced for the regional defense firm of Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin as an attorney specializing in the area of insurance defense. Recognizing her legal ability, she became associated with Rapposelli, Castro & Gonzales, and ultimately became the President and Managing Attorney of The Castro Firm, Inc. in 2006. The Castro Firm, Inc. has grown to become a respected regional law firm since then.

Ms. Castro serves on various boards. Currently, she is the President of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey and is a Past-President of the Delaware Hispanic Bar Association. She is the Region IV Immediate Past President for the Hispanic National Bar Association. Tabatha was a Past-President for the Multi-cultural Judges and Lawyers Section of the Delaware State Bar Association. Ms. Castro serves as a *pro bono* attorney for South Jersey Legal Services and sat on the Board of Directors

2022 M.E.N.T.E. CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS



Maria Z. Cortes, Esq.

Associate, Holland & Knight

Maria Z. Cortes is a real estate attorney in Holland & Knight's Philadelphia office, where she handles all aspects of commercial real estate transactions, including the acquisition, disposition, leasing, development, and financing of commercial real estate. In addition, she advises institutional lenders in a broad range of financing transactions for multifamily and commercial properties. Ms. Cortes represents owners, developers and investors in the purchase, sale and development of real property from agreement through closing, and counsels clients on zoning and land use matters.

Prior to joining Holland & Knight, Ms. Cortes was an associate at a national law firm. She previously served as a law clerk to the Honorable Julio L. Mendez for the Atlantic and Cape May Superior Court of New Jersey. During law school, Ms. Cortes was the managing notes editor for the *Rutgers Journal of Law and Public Policy*.



Alex J. Fajardo, Esq.

Associate, Stark & Stark

Mr. Fajardo is an Associate in Stark & Stark's Nursing Home Litigation Group. Mr. Fajardo concentrates his practice on personal injury claims, nursing home malpractice and litigation, with emphasis on wrongful death, catastrophic injury, negligence, and abuse claims arising in nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, psychiatric facilities, hospitals, boarding and group homes. He represents victims of abuse, neglect, and malpractice throughout New Jersey.

Prior to joining Stark & Stark, Mr. Fajardo worked for a personal injury firm in the Princeton area, where he concentrated his practice on nursing home malpractice.

Mr. Fajardo was born in Havana, Cuba, and immigrated to Weehawken, New Jersey, at the age of four. His immigrant experience fuels his dedication to serving clients from all walks of life and his appreciation for a legal system that operates on principles of justice and rule of law. Alex gives back to the community by serving on the Boards of Paul Robeson Charter School in Trenton and People and Stories / Gente y Cuento. He also serves as a Member of Stark & Stark's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, the New Jersey Supreme Court's Committee on Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement, the New Jersey Judiciary Working Group on Elder Justice and is an active member of the New Jersey Association for Justice. Alex also serves as Finance Director on the Executive Board of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey. He is also Co-Chair of the HBA-NJ's M.E.N.T.E. (Mental Education and Nourishment Through Engagement) Conference and a member of the Scholarship and J.P.A.C. Committees

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Raul Ayala, Esq.

*Deputy Federal Public Defender, Collaborative Courts
Supervising Attorney, Office of the Federal Public Defender*

Raul Raul Ayala is the Collaborative Courts Supervising Attorney for the Federal Public Defender's Office in the Central District of California. As such, he has been assigned as the lead Deputy Federal Public Defender for each of the Conviction and Sentence Alternatives (CASA) Program courts -- two in Los Angeles and one each in Santa Ana and Riverside.

In addition, he is a team member of the Substance Abuse Treatment and Reentry (STAR) Program, the district's post-conviction reentry drug court. Raul has been part of the CASA and STAR programs since 2011 and serves as the office supervisor for its developing Social Services Unit.

After working several years at a private non-profit community law firm that he and several other law school classmates established in the San Joaquin Valley upon graduating from UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, he became a trial deputy for the Federal Public Defenders Office from 1984 through 1988. During that time, he tried dozens of cases in district court and argued several matters before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In the following twenty years of private practice as a criminal defense lawyer, he tried many more cases in both federal and state courts and remained active in various bar associations and public interest scholarship foundations. He returned as a federal defender for a second "tour of duty" in 2008 and is a regular trainer for the national Defender Services Office of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts in Washington, D.C. Raul is currently chair of the ABA Criminal Justice Section's Diversion Standards Task Force and serves as a co-chair of the section's Alternatives to Incarceration and Diversion Committee.

As a recovering alcoholic since 2004, Raul has served on the ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs, on the board of The Other Bar, Inc. (a California non-profit organization for legal professionals in recovery) and is currently co-chair of the HNBA Attorney Wellness Committee.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Ruben Lambert, Psy. D.

Clinical and Consulting Psychologist, Wisdom Spring Wellness Services

Dr. Ruben Lambert is a licensed Psychologist and founder of Wisdom Spring Wellness Services (WisdomSpring.com). He specializes in Mind/Body Wellness Interventions. He is also a Zen Master in the Korean Zen Tradition.

Dr. Lambert integrates the wisdom of Zen with modern day scientific psychological research to provide training and interventions that target the mind and body. His approach is simplistic and the goal is to provide practical techniques for achieving optimal wellness, moment to moment, in daily life.



Lauren Martinez, Esq.

Deputy Ethics Counsel, New Jersey Office of Attorney Ethics

Lauren Martinez is Deputy Ethics Counsel with the Office of Attorney Ethics of the Supreme Court of New Jersey. In that capacity, Lauren investigates and prosecutes attorney misconduct, including financial crimes. Prior to joining the OAE, she served as an Assistant Prosecutor for the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, as well as the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office.

During her time as an Assistant Prosecutor, she specialized in motion practice supporting sexual assault victims' requests for Closed Circuit Television Testimony, as well as litigating dozens of appellate matters. Lauren graduated magna cum laude from Rutgers University in 2011. Specializing in behavioral neuroscience, she was published for her scientific work in the international peer-reviewed Journal, Behavioural Brain Research. She graduated from Rutgers Law in 2014 and was also a 2014 Eagleton Institute of Politics Graduate Fellow. In her spare time, she serves in multiple mentorship roles and on various Rutgers University Alumni committees to promote government service and diversity of the legal profession.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Ramon Ortiz, Esq.

Senior Attorney Counselor, New Jersey Lawyers Assistance Program

Ramon Ortiz is a Senior Attorney Counselor at the New Jersey Lawyer's Assistance Program (NJLAP) in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He has been employed by NJLAP for the past 25 years. Prior to joining the New Jersey Lawyers Assistance Program, he was an Associate Professor of Law, Clinical Professor of Law, and Director of Clinical Programs at Seton Hall Law School. He also practiced law with the firm of Ortiz & Velez for 20 years.



Grissel Seijo, Esq.

Senior Director, Counsel, Employment Law, Discovery, Inc.

Grissel Seijo has over 20 years of psychological counseling and legal advocacy experience, spending the last decade as an employment and labor attorney in Florida and New York. As Senior Director, Employment Legal, Ms. Seijo dedicates her time to counseling the business on a wide variety of topics from hiring, recruiting, retention, training, coaching, progressive discipline and making effective choices for company operations.

Ms. Seijo's expertise also extends to employment-related documents and learning materials, drafting, negotiation and implementation of employment contracts, separation agreements, executive compensation packages, restrictive covenants, and employee handbooks. She is also a sought-after lecturer and writer, focusing on topics such as hiring/firing, negotiations, corrective actions, internal investigations, diversity and inclusion, wage and hour issues, employment policies, restrictive covenants, and compliance.

Born and raised in the South Bronx, Ms. Seijo is a founding board member of the Líderes Board of LatinoJustice PRLDEF, one of the oldest non-profit civil rights organizations focusing on education, voting rights and immigration issues for Latinos. She is a strong supporter of peer networking and education as a pathway to success and an active mentor helping to prepare law students for the Florida and New York bar exams.

Currently, she serves as the Chair of a Latina Commission of the Hispanic National Bar Association, she actively looks to diversify the practice of law in corporations, law firms and at law schools.

HBA-NJ 2022 CALENDAR OF EVENTS*

Summer

- June 5-12 Sun Surf Seminars in Barcelona, Spain
- June 23 A Night with HNBA President Carlos Bollar
- July 8 41st Annual Scholarship Awards Gala
- August 20 Attorney v. Law Student Kickball Tournament
- Northern NJ Membership Mixer
- Southern NJ Membership Mixer
- Young Lawyers' Committee Summer Mixer

September

- Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration
- Financial Awareness & Community Training Seminar (F.A.C.T.S)

October

- Arts in the *Barrio* Networking

Continuing Programs

- American Dream Pipeline Program
- Civics Education Initiative
- Law School Mentorship Program
- Professional Development/CLE Programs

* Dates posted and to be posted on the HBA-NJ's website, www.njhba.org.

REGISTER AT WWW.NJHBA.ORG/EVENTS-CALENDAR



THE HBA-NJ'S 19TH ANNUAL SUN, SURF & SEMINARS CONFERENCE

June 5-12, 2022 · Barcelona, Spain

Join us in Barcelona, Spain to reconnect with old and new friends in a beautiful city while earning CLE credits!

Registration includes the pre-conference and main conference, winery tours and tastings, beach excursion, CLEs, and much more!

Pre-Conference (6/5-6/9 Daytime): \$150

Conference (includes CLEs) (6/9-6/12): \$400

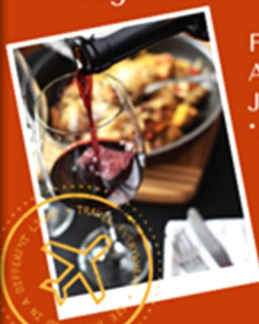
Guests: \$250 per person (excludes CLEs)

Full Conference Total: \$550*

*The HBA-NJ will be honoring the rate paid by those who previously registered and paid in full for this SSS.

Registration and reservations* must be made separately.

For more information, please email Arianna Moure at amoure@sh-law.com; or Jose Calves at jcalves@brownconnery.com.
*Accommodation details coming soon!



<https://njhba.org/event-4747524>



Save the Date!

The HBA-NJ's

41st Annual Scholarship Gala

"Una Noche en España"

Friday, July 8, 2022 at The Venetian



REGISTER AT WWW.NJHBA.ORG

ADVOCATE

PASSIONATELY

INSPIRE

CONSISTENTLY

LIVE

1ST ANNUAL HBA-NJ KICKBALL INVITATIONAL

**LAWYERS
& SPONSORS
VS
LAW STUDENTS
& '22 GRADS**

**Saturday, August 20th, 11 AM
BUCCLEUCH PARK
NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ
REGISTER AT WWW.NJHBA.ORG**



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

DIAMOND

Holland & Knight



PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER/CLE



SILVER



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE M.E.N.T.E. CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Tabatha Castro, Esq., HBA-NJ President

Conference Co-Chairs

Maria Z. Cortes, Esq.

Alex J. Fajardo, Esq.

Committee Members

Rey Lambert, Esq.

Alba V. Aviles, Esq.

Jorge R. de Armas, Esq.

Sylvia-Rebecca Gutiérrez, Esq.

Leidy Gutierrez, Esq.

Denise Mejia, Esq.

Jennifer Monge, Esq.

Renato H. Ronquillo, Esq.

2022 HBA-NJ OFFICERS & BOARD OF TRUSTEES



OFFICERS

Tabatha L. Castro, Esq., President
Albertina Webb, Esq., President Elect
Jacqueline S. Peña, Esq., Vice President of Northern Region
Jose A. Calves, Esq., Vice President of Southern Region
Cristal Lambert, Esq., Recording Secretary
Alex J. Fajardo, Esq., Treasurer
Jonathan Barrera, Esq., Membership Secretary
Alex J. Fajardo, Esq., Finance Director
Jessica Ramirez, Esq., Press Secretary
Arianna Mouré, Esq., Press Secretary/Parliamentarian
Joseph L. Linares, Esq., HNBA Liaison
Jessica Ortiz, Esq., Historian
Michael Plata, Esq., General Counsel

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jorge DeArmas, Esq., Trustee - Region 1 (Hudson County)
Sylvia-Rebecca Gutiérrez, Esq., Trustee - Region 2 (Essex County)
Christine A. Soto, Esq., Trustee - Region 3 (Bergen County)
Perla Medina, Esq., Trustee - Region 4 (Passaic County)
Jorge Sanchez, Esq., Trustee - Region 5 (Morris, Sussex & Warren Counties)
Lisette Guzman, Esq., Trustee - Region 6 (Union County)
Kathy Oviedo, Esq., Trustee - Region 7 (Mercer County)
Nathania Reyes, Trustee - Region 8 (Somerset & Hunterdon Counties)
Renato H. Ronquillo, Esq., Trustee - Region 9 (Middlesex County)
Jose Roman, Esq., Trustee - Region 10 (Monmouth & Ocean Counties)
Alex Gonzalez, Esq., Trustee - Region 11 (Camden & Burlington Counties)
Jonathan I. Amira, Esq., Trustee - Region 12 (Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties)
Maria Z. Cortes, Trustee - Region 13 (Atlantic and Cape May Counties)
Leidy Gutierrez, Esq., Trustee at Large
Alba V. Aviles, Esq., Trustee at Large
Raquel Vallejo, Esq., Trustee at Large
Evelyn Padin, Esq., Trustee at Large (5 Yrs +)
Jennifer Monge, Trustee at Large (YLC)
Dennise Mejia, Esq., YLC Chair
Reynold Lambert, Esq., Immediate Past President



Founded in 1980, the HBA-NJ is a 501 (c)(6) nonprofit Association that is comprised of attorneys, judges, law professors, law students, and other professionals who share a common interest in addressing the issues affecting Hispanics within the legal community.

The purpose of the Association is to serve the public interest: (i) by cultivating the art and science of jurisprudence, (ii) by advancing the standing of the legal profession, and (iii) by preserving high standards of integrity, honor, and professional courtesy among Hispanic lawyers.

Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey, P.O. Box 25562, Newark, NJ 07101
www.NJHBA.org