

Nina Cortell to Receive 2021 Morris Harrell Professionalism Award

October 29, 2021 Nina Cortell

PRACTICES Litigation, Appellate

Haynes Boone Senior Counsel [Nina Cortell](#) has been named recipient of the 2021 Morris Harrell Professionalism Award, which the Dallas Bar Association (DBA) gives annually to the lawyer who most exemplifies professional traits that other lawyers should admire and strive to emulate.

Nina will be honored at a DBA Award Luncheon on Nov. 12.

For more than four decades, Nina has represented corporations, public entities and individuals in cases that have put her at the forefront of Texas litigation practice. She has fittingly won many professional accolades, but what truly distinguishes her is her sustained commitment to serving others, within Haynes Boone, in Dallas, and across the state.

This month, Nina was profiled in a DBA *Headnotes* article written by her Haynes Boone colleague [Michelle Jacobs](#) that vividly captures Nina's remarkable career and demonstrates why she is so deserving of the Morris Harrell Professionalism Award. Below is an excerpt of the article:

Nina Cortell ... often cites a passage from *Pirkei Avot*, a book of Jewish ethical teachings, as a personal guiding principle: "It is not incumbent on us to complete the task of making the world a better place, but neither are we free to desist from trying." This has led her to prioritize service to others throughout her career and to always treat everyone with respect. It is thus fitting for her to receive an award that honors an "attorney who best exemplifies, by their conduct and character, truly professional traits who others seek to emulate and who all in the bar admire."

Nina began her career in 1976, when she was hired by Haynes Boone as its first female lawyer (and 13th lawyer overall). At that time, the legal landscape looked quite different. There were far fewer women attorneys and attorneys of color. That presented challenges that Nina wanted to address.

"If you think of your career like a pie, there are only so many slices to go around," Nina says. "One slice comprises the work and time that you devote to becoming a good lawyer. But you need to also save some slices for helping others and for causes that are meaningful to you."

Her career shows she has done just that.

At the request of then-State Bar President Martha Dickie, Nina chaired the State Bar Task Force on Hiring, Retention, and Promotion of Women and Minorities in Law Firms and Corporations. Under her leadership, the Task Force produced a comprehensive report that provided detailed guidance on best practices—all designed to provide pathways for the advancement of women and minorities in the legal profession. For her landmark work, she received a State Bar Presidential Citation for leadership in furtherance of the Bar's diversity initiatives.

Nina also co-founded and served as president of the University of Texas Law School's Center for

Women in Law (CWIL), which was launched in 2009 after a multi-year effort and is now the premier legal educational institution dedicated to the success of the entire spectrum of women in law—from first-year law students to the most experienced attorneys—providing them with the tools to advance both their careers and the careers of other women.

To read the full DBA *Headnotes* article, click [here](#).