

# Grant, Hall, Neal win CBA's Dickerson Awards

By [Jordyn Reiland](#)

*Law Bulletin staff writer*



The Chicago Bar Association honored the recipients of its 2019 Dickerson Awards at a luncheon Tuesday at the Standard Club. Pictured are the honorees (from left to right) Maurice Grant, principal of Grant Law LLC, Cook County Circuit Judge Sophia H. Hall and Langdon D. Neal, principal of Neal & Leroy LLC. — *Photo provided by The Chicago Bar Association*

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Two lawyers and a Cook County judge were honored by The Chicago Bar Association as this year's Earl Burrus Dickerson Award recipients.

The award, established in honor of the late Earl B. Dickerson, the first African-American to receive a law degree from the University of Chicago, is presented to lawyers and judges who have fought for justice and equality throughout their legal careers.

Maurice Grant, principal at Grant Law LLC, Langdon D. Neal, managing member and owner of Neal & Leroy LLC, and Circuit Judge Sophia H. Hall were recognized Tuesday at a Standard Club luncheon.

During their remarks, each recipient recognized those who helped them along the way, including family, friends, business partners and past Dickerson award winners.



recipients on the CBA's website.

Grant received his law degree in 1984 from the University of Maryland School of Law. He now specializes in commercial litigation, employment, corporate and real estate.

Earlier in his career he served as a judicial law clerk for the late 1st District Appellate Court justice Calvin C. Campbell and worked as an associate at what is now Much Shelist P.C.

The native Chicagoan thanked his family, including his mother, sister and his wife, for the impact they've had on his life.

He also noted one past Dickerson recipient, former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, who wanted to attend law school at the University of Maryland at a time it would not accept African-American students.

Marshall later argued a case, *Murray v. Pearson*, which allowed Donald Murray to be the first African-American student at Maryland Law.

"It is such an honor for me to have my name linked with his anywhere," Grant said.

Grant is also a musician. He has played piano since he was 4 years old. He later got a scholarship from DePaul University. Grant said he soon realized it was not the career path he wanted to take and switched his major to European and African history.

Hall has been a Cook County judge since her first election to the bench in 1980.

She said she would not be where she is today without the "gifts" by way of guidance of many.

"Even though those gifts may have come with no strings attached, they bespeak of the givers hopes and confidence in us," she said, referring to the mentorship and help she's received throughout her life.

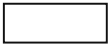
Wanting to be a lawyer at the age of 10 wasn't a strange idea for Hall when she had African-American women to look up to like the late Jewel Lafontant-Mankarious, a past honoree who became the first female deputy solicitor general of the United States.

She also recognized past honorees R. Eugene Pincham and Earl E. Strayhorn, who took her to dinner after she was assigned to the criminal division in 1983 — the first woman to serve in that role for 20 years.

Past honoree George N. Leighton, who died last June at age 105, "watched her grow up" as his wife taught her kindergarten class. He also presided over her swearing in, she said.

Since 1995, Hall has served as administrative presiding judge of the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Resource Section, an outreach arm of the court. She also is assigned to the Chancery Division.

Neal joined his family's firm in 1981, becoming the third generation of lawyers practicing in Chicago.



others.

"No one can receive an honor such as the one bestowed upon us today on their own because we all stand on the shoulders of the many who have made this possible and have supported us in our careers," he said.

Neal said he is "especially thankful" to be able to continue the history bestowed upon him by his father and grandfather who founded the firm in 1938.

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