

After clerking at the Oregon Law Center and the Federal Public Defender's Office, Kasia Rutledge went to work at the Metropolitan Public Defender, where she currently advocates for indigent clients charged with misdemeanors and felonies.

Outside of her demanding day job, Kasia engages in community outreach on many levels. She speaks at numerous events and trainings in Oregon and around the country to highlight problems that disproportionately affect people of color in the criminal justice system, including implicit bias and microaggressions. Through Opportunities for Law in Oregon (OLIO) and the Oregon State Bar New Lawyer Mentoring Program, she mentors minority law students and new attorneys by creating safe and inclusive environments in which their voices can be heard. Examples include hosting annual Thanksgiving feasts at her home and organizing on-campus barbeques for students of color.

Kasia works tirelessly to promote diversity, and she uses her voice effectively to speak out for—without speaking over—underrepresented groups in the legal community and beyond. Colleagues and mentees agree that Kasia's incredible ability to listen, learn, and care deeply about others allows her to build strong relationships and become an effective ally to minorities, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community. Kasia's mentees say that she is "a prime example of lawyering with love" and always takes time to mentor young attorneys at her office by helping them process the difficult emotional aspects of their work. More seasoned attorneys are inspired by Kasia's devotion to raising awareness on issues regarding racial and social privileges to build a stronger legal community that celebrates diversity.

Judge Mercedes Deiz made an inspiring contribution to promoting minorities in the legal profession and the community. Kasia's colleagues and mentees say she goes above and beyond to lift underrepresented members of our community and the legal profession. OWLS thanks Kasia for helping to advance our mission of promoting women and minorities in the law, and it is with honor that the organization presents the 2017 Judge Mercedes Deiz Award to Kasia Rutledge for her outstanding work promoting minorities in the law and the community.