



MichiganWomenForward



## Dorothy Comstock Riley

(1924 - 2004)

*Inducted:* **1991**

*Era:* **Contemporary**

*Locale:* **Detroit**

*Group:* **Hispanic**

*Area(s) of Achievement:* **Law**

Much has been written and said about Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley. Becoming the first woman appointed to the Michigan Court of Appeals was just the beginning for Justice Riley; she later became the first woman appointed to the Michigan Supreme Court. Even though she received some initial opposition to her appointment, Riley won an impressive victory in her own right by being elected Chief Justice.

It was often a difficult journey for Riley. As one of only three women in her law school class, she received several job rejections because firms opposed hiring women. Eventually the door opened as she went from interpreting price control laws for a Detroit retail chain, to an attorney for the Wayne county friend of the Court, a partner in a law firm, a Judge of the Wayne County Circuit Court, and then her tenure on the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court.

Judge Riley was active in such organizations as the National Women Judges Association, the National Center for State Courts, the American Bar Association, and the Board of Trustees of the Thomas M. Cooley Law School. She was also a member of the Michigan Women's Campaign Fund, the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, the National Women Lawyers Association, the United States Judicial Conference, and the Conference of Chief Justices. She served as a very active role model both in and out of the courtroom. Her philosophy reflected her actions: "The way to proceed is to always do the very best you can. Try to make yourself invaluable to the person you work for, and don't bring your problems to the office because that is not what you were hired to do. That formula worked for me, and I believe it can for anyone."

Photo Credit: Boynton Photography, Lansing, Michigan