



LAFD Chief Douglas Barry and Deputy City Attorney Michele Anderson.



From left: Assistant City Attorney Bernie Brown and Senior Assistant City Attorney Earl Thomas.



From left: Deputy City Attorney Gordon Turner; LAFD Chief Douglas Barry; Deputy City Attorney Carmen Hawkins (past President of the Association of Black City Attorneys); Deputy City Attorney Michele Anderson; City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo; Deputy City Attorney Serena Christian; and Senior Assistant City Attorney Earl Thomas.

Black City Attorneys Remember, Celebrate

■ Association of Black City Attorneys celebrates Black History Month.

Story and photos by Yvonne Liu, Office of Finance

CITY ATTORNEY — On Feb. 20, the closed African American Firefighter Museum in the old Fire Station 30 was not quiet at all.

"Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," the official song of the NAACP, could be heard outside the wooden panel doors where horse drawn fire trucks had once trotted forth. The singing was part of the Association of Black City Attorneys' celebration of Black History Month.

The Association was established in 1978 by founding members then-Assistant District Attorney Johnnie Cochrane and then-Deputy City Attorneys Les Brown, Galen Harmless, Sheryl Meshack and Cheryl Ward. The Association is currently 80 members strong.

"We have been doing this [annual luncheon] for many years," said Deputy City Attorney Michele B. Anderson, who organized this year's event. "It started out as an office lunch, where we cooked our own food and it just grew bigger and bigger."

Two fire station poles that date back to 1913 stand at opposite ends of the hall. Between them, 120 guests gathered for the

ceremony, including City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo, City Councilwoman Jan Perry, Fire Commission President Genethia Hundley-Hayes, and the Fire Chief command staff. This annual event has outgrown the Tom Bradley Room in City Hall.

Every year, the Association of Black City Attorneys celebrates Black History Month by honoring two outstanding African Americans. At this year's event, Senior Assistant City Attorney Earl Thomas and LAFD Fire Chief Douglas Barry joined an illustrious line of past honorees, including Judge Mablean Ephriam of the *Divorce Court* TV show; Judge Barbara Johnson; and Federal District Judge Terry J. Hatter Jr. Past award recipients have not exclusively been successful African Americans in the legal profession. In fact, the Association has honored the first African American appointed in Los Angeles Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, the first African American firefighter, and Tuskegee Airman Roger C. Terry, who was part of the first black military airmen crew that served during World War II.

LAFD Capt. Armando Hogan, who is also a board member of the African American Firefighter Museum, said, "It is so special to be here. We're here at a once segregated fire station, and now we see a rainbow of people here."

Fire Station 30, one of two segregated fire stations in Los Angeles, served the Central Avenue community between 1924 and 1955.

Hogan, with 25 years of City service, presented the award to Chief Barry, who was flattered by the award. He greatly appreciated and respected this honor that was bestowed upon him and understood the importance of working together in the spirit of cooperation within the City family.

Assistant City Attorney Bernie Brown, who presented the award to Earl Thomas, has 20 years of City service, at least 10 of which were alongside Thomas.

"I like to describe Earl as a master of diplomacy," Brown said. "He can dissolve any situation. He's in charge of over 250 City Attorneys and 150 support staff, and he runs the Criminal and Special Litigation Section."

This is no small task, since there are seven Criminal Branches throughout Los Angeles, where department attorneys prosecute criminal cases. The Office of the City Attorney interfaces frequently with local law enforcement agencies, including the LAPD and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, and numerous City, county, state, and federal regulatory agencies to effectively prosecute crimes occurring throughout Los Angeles.

Earl Thomas, whose eldest son, Garth, was present for the ceremony, said the event filled him with "an indescribable feeling of pride" for his office.

"It is overwhelming for me to receive this award," Thomas said. "It is very special to me because it is given by the people I work with on a daily basis."

"It is an honor to receive this recognition and to hear people say such nice things about me. It's an unforgettable day, and it gave me a great feeling to know that I have this kind of support out there."

Deputy City Attorneys Michele Anderson and Serena Christian organized this year's luncheon as Co-Chairs of the event. The Luncheon Committee members were Stacey Anthony, Kristen Byrdsong, Rose Dayo, Delia Fogelman, Armando Hogan, Lisa Hughes, Kim Johnson, Valerie Knight, Alma Martinez, Felton Newell, Akili Nickson, Laura Perez, Tayo Popoola, Christ Sanchez, Sharee Sanders, Gordon Turner, Ronnie Villanueva and Vanessa White.

The mission of the Association of Black City Attorneys has always been the mutual

aid, support and advancement of members of the African-American legal community both within and outside the Office of the Los Angeles City Attorney. The realization of that mission has been achieved throughout the years by way of the various activities undertaken by the membership. Within the City Attorney's Office, those activities have included meetings with the City Attorney and his staff to address employment conditions, promotions and career development opportunities for African American and other minority group attorneys. Outside the Office, the Association has furthered its goals by sponsoring events such as candidates' forums and debates, attending Law Day activities at area schools and assisting in the recruitment of promising new attorneys for employment.

"I am very proud of Earl Thomas," said City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo. "I am here to recognize the Association as a partner to our office in saving tax dollars and in fighting crime. [Earl Thomas] is the poster child for this organization. He stands for excellence, desire and service, and — what can I say — he's all-around a good man."

For more information on the African American Firefighter Museum, a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument and the recipient of the Los Angeles Conservancy's 1999 Preservation Award, go to <http://www.aaffmuseum.org/AboutUs/AboutUs.htm>

Chief Douglas Barry

LAFD Chief Douglas Barry has served the City of Los Angeles as a member of the Los Angeles Fire Department for 31 years.

He joined the Department as a Firefighter on Feb. 16, 1975, and served as Capt. I, Capt. II, Engineer, Battalion Chief, Chief of Staff, and Assistant Chief until he was promoted to Chief.

Chief Barry has served as liaison to the City Attorney's Office, the LAPD, the City Council, the Mayor's Office, the United States Coast Guard, Port Authorities, the Los Angeles County Fire Department, and the Long Beach Fire Department.

He has been responsible for fire protection at the Los Angeles International Airport and the Port of Los Angeles, three major refineries and a host of heavy commercial occupancies.

As a native son of Los Angeles, hailing from San Pedro, Chief Barry was born and raised in the South Bay, attending Narbonne High School, L.A. Harbor College, and California State University, Long Beach.

Chief Barry has earned the respect and support of not only his fellow firefighters, but also his community serving as Treasurer/Trustee and Deacon of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church in San Pedro. He is married and has three adult daughters. Chief Barry has maintained strong relationships with local community groups, block clubs, chambers of commerce and churches.



LAFD Chief Douglas Barry and his LAFD staff.



LAFD staff.

Senior Assistant Attorney Earl Thomas

Earl Thomas graduated from Yale University, where he served as captain of the baseball team. He continued his education at the University of Southern California Law School. After law school, he joined a high-powered litigation firm until he found his home in the City Attorney's Office in 1980.

He has worked to advance criminal prosecution and the profile of the City Attorney's Office for more than 28 years. He began as a trial deputy and has risen through the ranks to Senior Assistant City Attorney, where he is the Deputy Chief of Criminal and Special Litigation as well as head of all branch operations.

His professional career has also led him to serve as president of the John M. Langston Bar Association and Member of the Board of Directors of the Southwest College Foundation, along with numerous other professional organizations.

He has dedicated his life to baseball, litigation and family. His open-door policy has made him a mentor for any City Attorney seeking advice.



City Attorney Office Personnel, including Deputy City Attorneys and support staff.



From left: Senior Assistant City Attorney Earl Thomas (right) and City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo.



From left: Senior Assistant City Attorney Earl Thomas and his son, Garth.