



JUDITH BROWNE DIANIS

Executive Director of the Advancement Project; Lawyer, Professor & Civil Rights Advocate

Dianis has served as a lawyer, professor and civil rights advocate in the movement for racial justice. Hailed as a voting rights expert and pioneer in the movement to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, Dianis leads Advancement Project National Office's work in combating structural racism in education, voting, policing, criminal justice and immigration.

Dianis was raised in Hollis, Queens by two Harlem natives – one, an educator and community activist; the other a veteran of the nation's segregated Army. It was this upbringing that sparked Dianis' passion for civil rights. Her protest of racism as a student at the University of Pennsylvania and survival of job discrimination prompted Dianis to pursue a career in movement lawyering. She later graduated from Columbia University School of Law, received a Skadden Fellowship and went on to become the Managing Attorney in the Washington, D.C. office of the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund.

Since joining Advancement Project at its inception in 1999, Dianis has worked with grassroots organizations to wage successful campaigns using litigation, advocacy and communications. Dianis authored groundbreaking education reports including: *Opportunities Suspended and Derailed: The Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track*, detailing the unnecessary criminalization of students by their schools. Advancement Project National Office's work with grassroots partners significantly helped decrease student suspensions and arrests in Denver, Baltimore and school districts throughout Florida.

Dianis helped start Advancement Project's Voter Protection program during the election debacle in Florida in 2000, representing the NAACP. In the ensuing two decades, the organization partnered with grassroots and national organizations to thwart voter suppression efforts like strict voter ID requirements, cuts to early voting, the closure of polling locations and felony disenfranchisement. Advancement Project National Office is proud to be a founding member of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, recently credited with the historic passage of Amendment 4 to the Florida's state constitution. The measure automatically restores the voting rights of those with prior felony convictions.

Judith Browne Dianis was awarded the Prime Movers Fellowship for trailblazing social movement leaders and was named one of the "Thirty Women to Watch" by *Essence* magazine. She serves on the Board of Directors for Friends of the Earth and the Skadden Fellowship Foundation.

Judith Browne Dianis lives with her family in Maryland and is a proud basketball mom.