



Thomas F. Coleman has been practicing law for five decades. For the past ten years, the focus of his law practice has been pursuing justice for adults with mental and developmental disabilities who are involved in guardianship and conservatorship proceedings.

Coleman provides consultations and strategic advice to litigants and attorneys in such cases, both at the trial court and appellate court levels. These consulting services draw upon years of research he has conducted into the legal policies that govern conservatorship and guardianship proceedings as well as the practices of the judges and attorneys involved in these cases.

Coleman has written extensively on how these policies and practices deprive people with mental and developmental disabilities access to justice and equal rights. Coleman has submitted reports calling for guardianship and conservatorship reforms to government officials in the states of California, Missouri, Texas, and Washington, as well as to Congress and the U.S. Department of Justice. Coleman's advocacy in this area of the law is the subject of a documentary by filmmaker Greg Byers titled [Pursuit of Justice](#).

Coleman's current work involving conservatorship and guardianship reform is built on decades of experience in civil rights advocacy for other causes. This includes research, education, and advocacy involving sexual orientation and marital status discrimination, hate crimes, family diversity, personal privacy, and abuse of people with disabilities. This work is chronicled in his professional memoirs, [The Domino Effect](#), which was published in 2009.

Coleman has extensive experience in appellate litigation. He was co-counsel in a winning case before the United States Supreme Court and won the three cases before the California Supreme Court. He has filed *amicus curiae* briefs in appeals in California, Oregon, Oklahoma, Michigan, New Jersey, and New York. Over the span of 15 years, Coleman served as a court-appointed attorney in dozens of criminal ap-

peals before the California appellate courts.

Much of Coleman's professional work has been done through [Spectrum Institute](#), a nonprofit organization he founded in 1987. He is currently a legal consultant for the [Alternatives to Guardianship Project](#).

The second oldest of nine children, Coleman was raised in Ferndale, Michigan – a suburb of Detroit. He attended St. James High School where he was salutatorian of his graduating class in 1966. Coleman enrolled in Monteith College at Wayne State University where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1970. During his first year of law school, Coleman attended Detroit College of Law, ranking first in his class. He transferred in his second year to Loyola Law School in Los Angeles where he graduated with honors in 1973.

Thomas F. Coleman is married to Michael A. Vasquez. The two exchanged vows on a ship in international waters in 1981 – an era when same-sex marriage was not recognized by any nation in the world. They remarried in 2008 when the California Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality. Coleman and Vasquez live in Palm Springs, California.

[Curriculum Vitae](#)