

Justice Michael A. Cherry (Ret.)

Michael Cherry is a former Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court. He served as a member of the judiciary for over twenty years including two terms as Chief Justice. In 2019, Justice Cherry retired from public service and joined a private (ADR) Alternative Dispute Resolution practice with a focus on complex matters at (ARM) Advanced Resolution Management. His immense background and expertise can only be upstaged by his giant personality and love of people.

Justice Cherry received his undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri and a juris doctorate degree from Washington University School of Law. His legal career spans over 50 years. He began his career as a Deputy Clark County Public Defender before becoming a partner in the law firms of Manos & Cherry and later Cherry Bailus & Kelesis where he practiced primarily in the areas of personal injury, family law, civil and criminal litigation and appeals on both the state and federal levels. It was during this time that he developed a reputation for being hardworking, diligent and fair. His strong character and commitment to resolution led to his appointment as a Special Master in two very high profile cases that earned Justice Cherry national notoriety and the nickname “Master of Disaster.”

In 1981, Justice Cherry was appointed Special Master in the MGM Grand Hotel Fire Litigation that involved 87 deaths, more than 600 injured and millions in damages. It was a case that had international reach with lawyers from all over the world. There were 2000 plaintiffs and several hundreds of defendants including MGM, suppliers, engineers, architects, chemical companies and elevator firms. Justice Cherry performed above and beyond, commanded the respect of all involved, and paved the way for how consumer cases, mass torts and disaster litigation is handled today. He was also instrumental in settling the insurance bad faith claims when it was discovered that MGM Grand had negotiated a retroactive insurance policy because its existing policy was not enough. Subsequently in 1983, he was named Special Master on the Las Vegas Hilton Fire Litigation, another massive lawsuit with multi-million dollar consequences.

In addition to his other work in the legal field, Justice Cherry served as an Alternate Municipal Judge for the cities of Las Vegas and Henderson, and as a Justice of the Peace Pro Tem as well as

a Small Claims Referee for Clark County. He later added teaching to his very busy schedule, becoming an instructor for the University of Phoenix where he taught business law and history, and an adjunct professor at Touro University.

In 1997, Justice Cherry was appointed to head up the newly created Clark County Special Public Defender's office where he led a staff of six attorneys who oversaw major homicide and conflict cases from the Clark County Public Defender's Office.

In 1998, Justice Cherry was elected to serve as a Judge in the Eighth Judicial District Court. It was during this time that he worked alongside his colleagues Justice Nancy Saitta and the late Judge Allan Earl to establish the Construction Defect Court in response to entire subdivisions making claims on issues such as poor workmanship or the use of inferior materials. They quickly implemented a system wherein they streamlined case management for construction defect and other voluminous cases.

Justice Cherry was elected to the Nevada Supreme Court in 2006. He quickly made a name for himself as Chair of the Indigent Defense Commission that examined how the justice system deals with criminal defendants who cannot afford their own attorneys. Then in 2012, Justice Cherry ran unopposed for a second 6-year term and served as Chief Justice from 2012 to 2013. It was during this time that he pushed for a much-needed appellate court and made it his mission to get the word out to the public how necessary the Court of Appeals was to Nevada. In fact, he was incredibly instrumental in the building of the courtrooms and chambers for the Supreme Court of Nevada and Nevada Court of Appeals.

By the time Justice Cherry stepped into his second term as Chief Justice in 2017, Nevada had an Appellate Court, his decade-long effort to improve indigent defense was a reality with the passing of Senate Bill 377, reforms to the guardianship system in Nevada as well as the creation of the Nevada Sentencing Commission. His distinguished and sincere service to clients, to the judiciary, and to the state has prepared Justice Cherry for his next chapter as a Neutral with Advanced Resolution Management, and as a Mediator, Arbitrator, Special Master and Private Judge.