

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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MAYOR DE BLASIO APPOINTS 18 JUDGES TO FAMILY, CRIMINAL, AND CIVIL COURT AND APPOINTS JUSTICE HELEN E. FREEDMAN (RET.) TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced 18 judicial appointments and reappointments, including two appointments and two reappointments to Family Court; six appointments and five reappointments to Criminal Court; and two appointments and one reappointment to Civil Court. Judges appointed or reappointed to Civil Court sit in either Family or Criminal Court. The Mayor has also appointed retired Justice Helen E. Freedman to the Advisory Committee on the Judiciary.

“These appointees represent some of the fiercest champions of justice our City has to offer,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “By leading our courts, they will play a critical role in my administration’s effort toward a recovery for all New Yorkers.”

Family, Criminal and Civil Court are part of the New York State Unified Court System. Family Court judges hear cases related to adoption, foster care and guardianship, custody and visitation, domestic violence, abused or neglected children, and juvenile delinquency. The City’s Criminal Court handles misdemeanor cases and lesser offenses and conducts arraignments. The two judges newly appointed to Civil Court are presiding in Family Court.

The Mayor appointed the following justice to the Advisory Committee on the Judiciary:

Justice Helen E. Freedman first served as a Civil Court Judge in 1979, then became an acting Supreme Court Justice beginning in 1984 before being elected to the New York State Supreme Court in 1988. She served on the Supreme Court, Appellate Term from 1995 to 1999. After being re-elected to the Supreme Court in 2002, Justice Freedman served in the Commercial Division of the New York County Supreme Court prior to her 2008 appointment to the Appellate Division First Department by Governor David Paterson. After serving over three decades on the New York State bench, Justice Freedman now works for Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services, Inc. (JAMS) conducting mediations, arbitrations, and neutral evaluation matters. In addition, she currently serves as Secretary of the Historical Society of the New York Courts, Editor of its publication Judicial Notice and as Vice Chair of the Pattern Jury Instruction Committee of the Supreme Court Justices Association. Justice Freedman also teaches as an adjunct professor at New York Law School.

The Mayor appointed the following judges to Family Court:

Judge Ashley Black was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in January 2020 and serves in Family Court. Judge Black began her legal career as an Agency Attorney with the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Prior to her appointment, she served with the New York State Unified Court System for 13 years as a Court Attorney and then as Court Attorney Referee. She is a graduate of Rutgers University and received her J.D. from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

Judge Robert Hettleman was first appointed as a Family Court Judge in December 2013 and served for four years in Bronx County. He began his career as a law clerk to United States Magistrate Judge Roanne Mann, Eastern District of New York, then moved on to the New York County District Attorney's Office where he served for nearly 12 years. He received his undergraduate degree from Dartmouth College and his law degree from New York University School of Law.

The Mayor appointed the following judges to Criminal Court:

Judge Deepa Ambekar was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in May 2018 and serves in Criminal Court. Prior to her appointment, Judge Ambekar served with the New York City Council as a Senior Legislative Attorney and Counsel to the Committee on Public Safety, as well as a former Staff Attorney with the Legal Aid Society's Criminal Defense Division. She is a graduate of the University of Michigan and received her J.D. from Rutgers Law School.

Judge Paul McDonnell was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in January and serves in Criminal Court. Judge McDonnell served with the New York State Unified Court System for over three decades in various roles, including as the Deputy Counsel of Criminal Justice at the Office of Court Administration. Prior to that, he served as a Principal Court Attorney in Supreme Court, in both New York and Bronx counties. He is a graduate of Hobart and William Smith Colleges and received his J.D. from Washington & Lee Law School.

Judge Linda Poust Lopez was elected to Civil Court in January 2011 and has been serving in Criminal Court. She was designated as an Acting Justice of the Supreme Court in 2017. Prior to her appointment, Judge Poust Lopez served with the Legal Aid Society for nearly 18 years in the Manhattan and Bronx Criminal Defense Practice. In addition to this, she maintained a solo practice focusing on Criminal and Family Court appellate matters. Judge Poust Lopez received her undergraduate degree from Herbert H. Lehman College and her law degree from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

Judge Quynnda Santacroce was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in January 2019 and has been serving in Criminal Court. Judge Santacroce previously served with the New York State Unified Court System as a Principal Court Attorney in Criminal Court, Queens County in the Integrated Domestic Violence Part/Queens Youth Part. Prior to that, she served with the Queens County District Attorney's Office in several bureaus. She is a graduate of Cornell University and received her J.D. from Touro College, Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center.

Judge Jean Walsh was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in January 2020 and has been serving in Criminal Court. Judge Walsh began her career at the Bronx County District

Attorney's Office, where she served in various bureaus for 14 years before joining the United States Attorney's Office, SDNY, and the the New York State Inspector General's Office. She then returned to serve as the Executive Assistant District Attorney and Chief of the Investigations Division in the Bronx County District Attorney's Office prior to her appointment to the bench. She is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College and received her J.D. from SUNY Buffalo Law School.

Judge Jay Weiner was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in April 2019 and has been serving in Criminal Court. Judge Weiner formerly worked with Appellate Advocates, served as an Assistant District Attorney in both Queens and Kings counties, and established his own solo practice. Prior to his appointment, he served with the New York State Unified Court System as a Principal Law Clerk in the Appellate Division, Second Department. He is a graduate of Dartmouth College and received his J.D. from Fordham University School of Law.

The Mayor appointed the following judges to Civil Court:

Judge Janet McFarland formerly served with the Bronx County District Attorney's Office, the Mental Hygiene Legal Service as Principal Attorney at Woodhull Medical Center, and as a Court Attorney Referee in Richmond County Family Court. She is a graduate of Fordham University and received her law degree from Brooklyn Law School. Judge McFarland is appointed to Civil Court and has been assigned to Family Court.

Judge Gigi Parris was formerly a Corporate Associate with Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP. After three years, she became a Family Defense Practice Staff Attorney with The Bronx Defenders. She also served as a Supervising Attorney of the Family Defense Team at Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem and an Associate Court Attorney to a Bronx Family Court Judge. Prior to her appointment to the bench, she served as Supervising Court Attorney to the Supervising Judge of Queens County Family Court. She received her B.A., *cum laude*, from Harvard University and her law degree from the University of Virginia, School of Law. Judge Parris is appointed to Civil Court and has been assigned to Family Court.

The Mayor reappointed the following judges to Family Court:

Judge Elenor C. Reid Cherry was appointed to the Family Court in January 2018. She was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in June 2017 and served in Family Court. Prior to her appointment, Judge Cherry served with the Office of the Corporation Counsel including the Family Court Division. She also served as a Court Attorney and Principal Law Clerk for 16 years. She is a graduate of John Jay College of Criminal Justice and received her J.D. from New York Law School.

Judge Valerie Pels was appointed to the Family Court in January 2013. Prior to her appointment, she served with the Legal Aid Society in the Juvenile Rights Division for over eight years. She then joined the New York State Unified Court System and served as Principal Law Clerk in the Youth Part and Integrated Domestic Violence Part of the Supreme Court. She is a graduate of Duke University and Yale Law School.

The Mayor reappointed the following judges to Criminal Court:

Judge Efrain Alvarado, an Acting Supreme Court Justice, was first appointed to the Criminal Court in August 1988. He formerly served as the Administrative Judge for Criminal Matters of the Supreme Court in Bronx County from 2009 to 2013. Prior to this, Judge Alvarado served with the Bronx County District Attorney's Office for 12 years, holding various positions including Chief Assistant District Attorney. He graduated from the University College of Arts and Science, New York University and received his law degree from New York University School of Law.

Judge Keshia Espinal was appointed to the Criminal Court in May 2017. She is currently the Supervising Judge of Kings County Criminal Court. Judge Espinal formerly served with the Queens County District Attorney's Office for 16 years in several bureaus, including as a Supervising Assistant District Attorney for the Domestic Violence Bureau. She is a graduate of St. Joseph's College and received her J.D. from Western New England University School of Law.

Judge Gilbert Hong, an Acting Supreme Court Justice, was appointed to the Criminal Court in September 2008. He was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in July 2007 serving in Criminal Court. Prior to his appointment, he was with the New York County District Attorney's Office and served as a Deputy Bureau Chief in New York City's Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. Judge Hong received his undergraduate degree from Columbia College and his J.D. from Cornell Law School.

Judge Christopher Robles was appointed to the Criminal Court in January 2018. He was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in June 2017 and served in Criminal Court. Judge Robles was in private practice for nearly 18 years with litigation experience in family law, civil practice, and appellate practice. He is a graduate of St. John's University and received his law degree at CUNY School of Law.

Judge Cori Weston was appointed to the Criminal Court in June 2016. Prior to her appointment to the bench, she served as an attorney with the New York County Defender Services for nearly 19 years and The Legal Aid Society's Criminal Defense Division for seven years. She received her undergraduate degree from Hofstra University and her J.D. from Fordham University School of Law.

The Mayor reappointed the following judge to Civil Court:

Judge Jonathan Shim was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in February 2018 and has been serving in Family Court. Prior to his appointment, Judge Shim worked as an associate at several firms before starting his own practice in family and matrimonial law, which he maintained for nine and a half years. He is a graduate of the SUNY at Albany and received his law degree from Albany Law School.

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