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**MAYOR DE BLASIO SWEARS IN 28 JUDGES RECENTLY APPOINTED TO FAMILY COURT,  
CRIMINAL COURT, AND CIVIL COURT**

**NEW YORK**—Mayor de Blasio today swore in 28 judges recently appointed to the Family Court, Criminal Court, and Civil Court. Eight of the judges sworn in today were reappointed, and 20 were newly appointed.

“To ensure New Yorkers have access to a fair, equitable justice system, we need judges who are qualified, honest and reflective of the people of this city,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “With their wealth of legal experience, these appointees represent all five boroughs and all walks of life. From the first female South Asian-American judge in New York City to a former NYPD First Deputy Commissioner, these talented leaders truly reflect the diverse range of communities that make up our great city.”

Family Court, Criminal Court, and Civil Court are part of the New York State Unified Court System. The Mayor appoints judges to 10-year terms in the New York City Criminal Court and the Family Court within the city. While Civil Court judges are elected to 10-year terms, the Mayor appoints judges to interim one-year terms to fill vacancies in the New York City Civil Court.

The Mayor swore in the following judges:

**Family Court Appointments**

**Judge Elizabeth Barnett**, who was appointed in February 2015, has worked for the New York State Unified Court System for more than two decades in various capacities, including Deputy Counsel to the Chief Administrative Judge and Chief Counsel for the New York City Family Court. As a member of the New York City Bar Association, Judge Barnett has previously served on a number of committees, including the Committee on Family Court & Family Law, the Committee on Juvenile Justice, and the Committee on AIDS.

**Judge Jacqueline Deane**, who was appointed in February 2015, previously served as a training team leader/senior attorney at the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, and served with the Legal Aid Society for 27 years, primarily in the Juvenile Rights Division. Judge Deane is a member of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, and the Planning Committee for Teen Day, and the LGBT Pride Celebration Planning Committee of Kings County Family Court.

**Judge Peter DeLizzo**, who was appointed in April 2015, has previously served as an Assistant District Attorney in Kings County, an associate attorney in the Office of the Public Defender of Richmond County, and served as a Court Attorney-Referee in Richmond County for more than eight years. Judge DeLizzo, who lives on Staten Island with his partner and two children, is the first openly gay Staten-Island-based judge in New York.

**Judge Alicea Elloras**, who was appointed in April 2015, most recently served as a Support Magistrate in Family Court for the past six years, and has previously served as a Staff Attorney with the Administration for Children’s Services. Judge Elloras lived in New York City public housing in the Bronx during part of her childhood, and now lives in Manhattan.

**Judge Adetokunbo Fasanya** was appointed in January 2015 and was first appointed as an interim civil court judge in October 2013, and had been serving in Family Court. Prior to his appointment, he served with the New York City Child Welfare Administration, and was in private practice for 14 years, specializing in several areas including family law. Judge Fasanya grew up in Nigeria, and received his law degree from Nigerian Law School in Lagos, Nigeria before moving to the United States.

**Judge Carol Goldstein**, who was appointed in April 2015, previously served for 17 years as a Court Attorney Referee in Family Court, and served with the Legal Aid Society for almost 20 years, primarily in the Juvenile Rights Division. Judge Goldstein received her law degree from Brooklyn Law School, and currently lives in Manhattan.

**Judge Alma Gomez**, who was appointed in February 2015, previously served as Executive Director/General Counsel for The Bronx Council for Economic Development and served as a Court Attorney in Criminal Court and Supreme Court for nearly 17 years. She is currently a member of the Bronx Women's Bar Association, the Puerto Rican Bar Association, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Law Association of Greater New York. Judge Gomez holds a law degree from New York University as well as a Masters in Social Work from Columbia University.

**Judge Connie Gonzalez**, who was appointed in February 2015, previously worked for the Nassau County Legal Aid Society for 13 years, most recently serving as Family Court Bureau Chief. Judge Gonzalez recently turned 40, making her the youngest judge of the 2015 mayoral appointments.

**Judge Michael Milsap**, who was appointed in February 2015, most recently served as a Support Magistrate in Family Court for 21 years, and previously served in the New York City Human Resources Administration as an Assistant Supervisor in the Office of Legal Affairs. Judge Milsap is involved with several civic and professional organizations, including the Metropolitan Black Bar Association and the Association of Gay and Lesbian Judges.

**Judge Erik Pitchal**, who was appointed to the Family Court in January 2015, was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in January 2013, where he had been serving in Family Court. Prior to his appointment, he served with the Legal Aid Society in the Juvenile Rights Division. Judge Pitchal has extensive experience in the field of children's welfare and advocacy, and previously worked at Suffolk University Law School as Director of the Child Advocacy Clinic and as an Assistant Clinical Professor of Law.

**Judge Fiordaliza Rodriguez**, who was appointed in February 2015, previously worked for the New York City Administration for Children's Services, and most recently served as a Court Attorney-Referee in Family Court. Judge Rodriguez holds a law degree from CUNY School of Law and a Masters in Social Work from The New School for Social Research.

### **Family Court Reappointments**

**Judge Tandra Dawson** was first appointed to the Family Court in July 1998, and currently presides in the Integrated Domestic Violence Court in New York County. She was previously a prosecutor in the Bronx County District Attorney's Office for nearly 15 years. Judge Dawson serves as a member of the Independent Review Board at the Office of Children and Family Services.

**Judge Douglas Hoffman** was first appointed to the Criminal Court in January 2003, and was assigned to the Family Court. He was subsequently appointed to the Family Court in October 2005. He is currently the Supervising Judge of New York County Family Court. Judge Hoffman is the Chair of the Family Court Advisory Committee, Appellate Division, First Department, and co-Chair of the New York County Committee on Disproportionate Minority Representation in Foster Care.

**Judge Clark Richardson** was first appointed to the Family Court in 1995. He was previously a Borough Chief in the Family Court Division of the New York City Law Department, and also served as a Supervising Judge of Bronx County Family Court. Judge Richardson resides in Manhattan, and holds a law degree from Cornell University.

**Judge Edwina Richardson-Mendelson** was first appointed to the Family Court in January 2003. She is currently the Administrative Judge for New York City Family Court. She was formerly a Court Attorney-Referee in the Queens County Family Court. Judge Richardson-Mendelson is the Chair of the New York City Family Court Judicial Operations Advisory Group and chairs several committees within the New York City Family Court Advisory Council.

### **Criminal Court Appointments**

**Judge Abena Darkeh**, who was appointed in February 2015, most recently served as Deputy Commissioner for Regional Affairs and Federal Programs for the New York State Division of Human Rights, and previously served as Citywide Domestic Violence Coordinator for New York City Criminal Court. Judge Darkeh is the co-Founder and Vice President of the Association of Ghanaian Lawyers of America.

**Judge Claudia DePeyster**, who was appointed in April 2015, most recently served with the New York City Police Department as an Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Trials for 11 years, and has served as an attorney with the Bureau of Investigations and Trials of the New York City Fire Department.

**Judge Guy Mitchell**, who was appointed in February 2015, served most recently as an Assistant Attorney General In Charge of the Harlem/Bronx Regional Office, and formerly served as Chief of the Criminal Division in the United States Virgin Islands Department of Justice. Judge Mitchell has been a member of a number of professional associations for many years, including the Black Bar Association of Bronx County and the Dominican Bar Association.

**Judge Kathryn Paek**, who was appointed in February 2015, most recently served as Principal Court Attorney in Supreme Court, Criminal Term, Kings County and as Chief of Staff in the Office of Policy and Planning for the New York State Office of Court Administration. Judge Paek is the first female Korean-American judge to serve in the New York State Unified Court System.

**Judge Laurie Peterson**, who was appointed to the Criminal Court in January 2015, was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in January 2013 and had been serving in Criminal Court. She previously served as the Principal Court Attorney to a Supervising Judge of the Criminal Court. Judge Peterson resides in Queens.

**Judge Raja Rajeswari**, who was appointed in April 2015, previously worked with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office for her entire career in several bureaus including Criminal Court, Narcotics, Supreme Court, and the Sex Crimes Special Victims Bureau, where she last served as Deputy Chief. Judge Rajeswari is the first female South Asian-American judge to be appointed in New York City, and immigrated to Staten Island from India as a teenager. She is fluent in several Indian, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian languages.

### **Criminal Court Reappointments**

**Judge Bruna DiBiase** was first appointed to the Criminal Court in December 2013. She previously served as Chief of Staff to the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Policy and Planning with the New York State Unified Court System. Judge DiBiase resides in Queens and attended Queens College before receiving her law degree from Hofstra University.

**Judge George Grasso** was first appointed to the Criminal Court in January 2010. He became Supervising Judge of Arraignments for New York City Criminal Courts in 2012. He also served with the New York City Police Department for almost 30 years, where he eventually held the position of First Deputy Commissioner.

Judge Grasso is credited with spearheading CourtStat – a computer-tracking system, inspired by CompStat, for cases in arraignment courts – which has contributed to a sharp decrease in arrest-to-arraignment times.

### **Civil Court Appointments**

**Judge Heidi Cesare** was appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in February 2015 and is serving in Criminal Court. She most recently served with the Federal Defenders of New York, and has served with the Legal Aid Society in the Criminal Defense Division and with the Federal Defender Division, Eastern District of New York.

**Judge Marguerite Dougherty** was appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in February 2015 and is serving in Criminal Court. She most recently served as Executive Director and Assistant General Counsel for JP Morgan Chase & Co. She was previously a Court Officer and Court Clerk in the Criminal Court and Supreme Court for 18 years. She holds a law degree from Brooklyn Law School.

**Judge Althea Drysdale** was appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in February 2015 and is serving in Criminal Court. She served as a Staff Attorney for the Legal Aid Society for 10 years, and most recently served as a Senior Trial Attorney for the New York County Defender Services. Judge Drysdale was born in St. Andrew, Jamaica, and currently resides in Manhattan.

### **Civil Court Reappointments**

**Judge Tracey Bing** was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in October 2013 and has been serving in Family Court, Bronx County. She has served with Harlem Legal Services, the Legal Aid Society, and as Director of the Family Law/Domestic Violence Unit of Manhattan Legal Services. Judge Bing, who resides in the Bronx, received a law degree from CUNY School of Law, where she served as the president of Black Law Students.

**Judge Laura Johnson** was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in January 2013 and has been serving in Criminal Court, Kings County. She previously served with the New York County District Attorney's Office and the Legal Aid Society, including as Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Appeals Bureau. Judge Johnson resides in Brooklyn, and received a law degree from Columbia University.

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